

RECOLLECTIONS OF  
AN OFFICER  
OF  
NAPOLEON'S ARMY



BLAZE



NUNC COGNOSCO EX PARTE



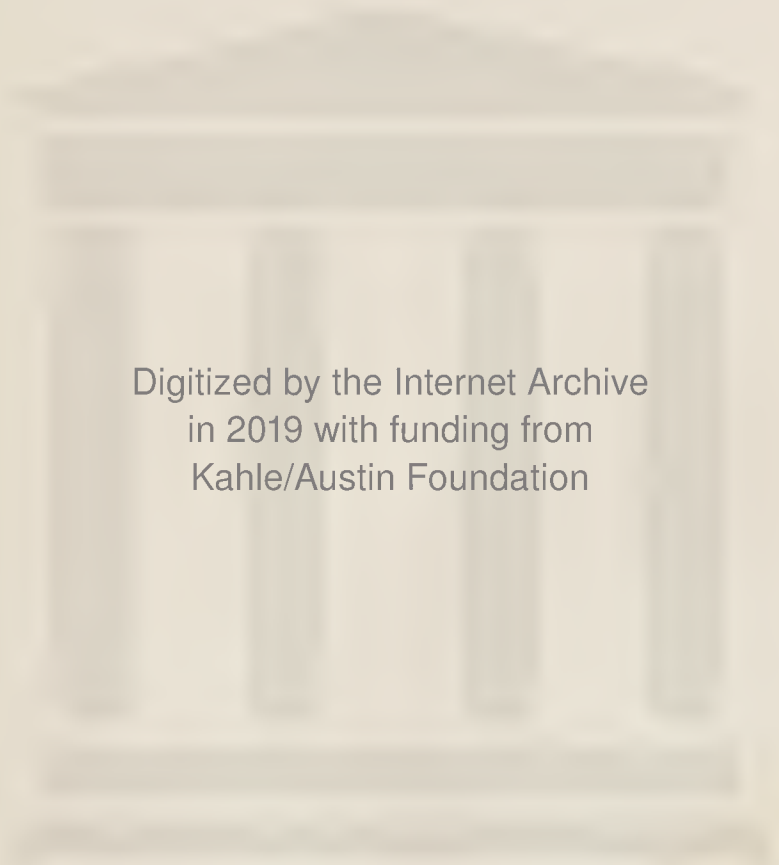
TRENT UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY

PRESENTED BY

Mrs. C. Roy Greenaway  
in memory of  
her husband







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2019 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation



THE EMPEROR  
In the Uniform of a Grenadier.

# RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OFFICER OF NAPOLEON'S ARMY

BY

Captain Elzéar Blaze

*Translated from the French by*

E. Jules Méras

New York

STURGIS & WALTON  
COMPANY  
1911

DC198 .B6A43

Copyright 1911

By STURGIS & WALTON COMPANY

---

Set up and electrotyped. Published October, 1911

## INTRODUCTION

Elzéar Jean Louis Joseph Blaze, soldier and writer, was born at Cavaillon, France, in 1788 and died in Paris in 1848. He was a pupil of the Fontainebleau Military School and as a member of the *Grande Armée* took part in the Campaigns of Prussia, 1807; Austria, 1809; Spain, 1811; Russia, 1812; Saxony, 1813; and in the investment of Hamburg, 1814. He continued in the army until the Restoration at which time he retired with the rank of captain. As a writer he has left us a half dozen or more works on hunting, and his *Vie Militaire sous l'Empire, ou Mœurs de Garnison, de Bivouac et de Caserne*, which book is here presented under the title of *Recollections of an Officer of Napoleon's Army*.

Although the Empire of the great Napoleon is the epoch about which the greatest number of memoirs have been written, yet it is not necessarily the best known. The Memoirs of the Marshals

## INTRODUCTION

of the Empire were those first published, then came those of the generals, and lastly those of the subaltern officers.

In a book full of spirit and of a kind of Southern humour, from which part of France he came, Captain Blaze gives us the plain, straightforward story of the experiences in the field of one of Napoleon's soldiers. Having served in the army from 1806 to the Restoration, Blaze is in a position to give us particularly valuable information. From Friedland to Wagram, having won the rank of captain, he remained, out of liking for military life, in direct contact with the troopers. A wide-awake and judicious observer, Blaze describes the soldier without flattery. His is a most precious contribution to the study of the soldier of the Empire whose disappointments and hopes he shared.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

The Emperor in the Uniform of a Grenadier . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	FACING PAGE
Alexander First, Emperor of Russia . . . . .	46
The Battle of Eylau . . . . .	66
The Battle of Austerlitz . . . . .	118
Murat . . . . .	132
Napoleon at Tilsit . . . . .	158
" <i>Vive L'Empereur</i> " . . . . .	214
Frederick William Third, King of Prussia . . . . .	228





THE FONTAINEBLEAU MILITARY  
SCHOOL



# RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OFFICER OF NAPOLEON'S ARMY

## CHAPTER I

### THE FONTAINEBLEAU MILITARY SCHOOL

During the Empire, one could enter the service in three different ways: one could enlist, it was the simplest and least expensive way; one could enroll in the *vérites*,<sup>1</sup> or else enter the Fontainebleau Military School as a pupil.

The Fontainebleau Military School opened its doors for 1,200 francs a year, but the crowd of young men blocked them; everyone could not enter. Those who had not the time to await their turn of admission entered the *vérites*; it was a harder way, one won the epaulet with greater difficulty, but he wore a uniform sooner; at eighteen that meant something.

One must have been a soldier at that time to understand what magic there was in a uniform.

What a vision of a glorious future there was in every young head wearing a plume for the first time! Every French soldier carried his bâton of marshal of France in his cartridge-box; it was only a question of getting it out. We saw nothing difficult in that; to-day I even think that at that time we would not have limited to that our ambitious dreams.

One thing worried us. "The devil!" we said, "suppose Napoleon should stop when in so fine a way. If he should conceive the unhappy idea of making peace, farewell to all our hopes." Fortunately our fears were not realised, for he cut out more work for us than we were able to perform.

Two weeks after my arrival, I had worked so well that I was considered worthy of mounting guard for the first time. Once installed at the post, the old soldiers who happened to be with me made the enumeration of all the young *vérites* who, in a position equal to mine, had paid for their welcome by treating their comrades at a neighbouring inn. Such a one had done things in fine style; another had behaved like a *pékin*, he had

hardly given enough to drink; one had entertained lavishly: fresh pork-chops, sealed wine, coffee, liqueurs. . . . I then decided that I should do as the last mentioned.

That day I wrote my name on the walls, behind the sentry-box, with my bayonet; chance having lately led me to the gate of the Champ-de-Mars, I tried to see if I could still read it; after having sought for a long time, I finally found it all covered with moss. The guard-house luncheon came back to my mind with all its joyous circumstances. Is there left another guest beside me, said I, thinking of all the events that had followed one another in the interval of thirty years. If some old soldier had shown his face burned by the sun of the Pyramids, I should have embraced him heartily; oh! the good dinner we should have had together!

Many *vélites* found the soldier's life tedious: to become officers sooner, they went to the Fontainebleau Military School; I was among the latter. My turn came to go to Fontainebleau. . . . I departed. I was then obliged to recommence my education: in the *vélites* we had

mounted drills, there we drilled on foot; from the carbine I had to change to the musket. That was a small matter.

In the imperial guards the hair was worn short in front, and the *queue* in the back; at the military school we wore the forelock without *queue*; so that for six months, cut in front or cut in the back, I was always cut; my head remained bald and much resembled that of a choir boy.

General Bellavenne was governor of the Fontainebleau Military School. All those who have known him can say that the place seemed to have been created for him. We considered him strict, but we were wrong; when one has six hundred eighteen-year-old heads to lead, it is difficult to do so without being strict. His *alter ego*, the brave Kuhmann, seconded him capitally. This epithet of *brave* had been given him by a man who was a judge, by Napoleon himself. He was a good, excellent Alsatian, who mangled the French language, a stickler on discipline, and thinking only of drills. I can still see him on the threshold of his door, at the moment when the battalion took their arms, making himself taller by three inches,

and shouting: "Heads erect, heads erect; immobility in the most beautiful part of the drill!"

At five in the morning, the drum awoke us. The courses in history, geography, mathematics, drawing and fortifications kept us busy from hour to hour; change of work was our relaxation and, to vary our pleasures, four hours of drill, cleverly arranged, divided our day in a most agreeable manner; so that on going to bed, we had our heads full of the heroes of Greece and Rome, of rivers and mountains, of angles and tangents, of trenches and bastions. All these things were a bit mixed in our minds, the drill alone was positive; our shoulders, our knees, and our hands prevented us from mixing it with the rest.

Novels were prohibited at the military school: one of our officers held them in horror. When he walked through the study-rooms, he confiscated everything that looked to him like a novel. He knew the titles of the books we were supposed to have, the remainder was reputed novels, forbidden, and confiscated for good.

The pupils were expected to know Latin; it was not taught at the school; consequently Virgil

was not on our officer's list; one evening, in the study room, I was reading the "Æneid"; he stepped behind me, and seized my book as a vulture would carry away a nightingale.

"Another novel!" he exclaimed with a triumphant air.

"You are mistaken, it is Virgil."

"What does that Virgil talk about?"

"Of the siege of Troy, of wars, of battles . . ."

"Troy! Troy! It is fabulous; another novel, didn't I say so! Read *l'Ecole de Peloton* (the platoon school); that's the best book to form the youth. If you need diversion, imitate your neighbour. He is acquiring knowledge, he is a young man who employs his time usefully; if he stops the reading, and mighty interesting reading it is, of the roster of 1791, it is to take up books of philosophy; he does not waste his time, as you do, in reading twaddle." And my neighbour was reading *Thérèse Philosophe*, a book anything but philosophical.

"See how sharp all those pupils are! To baffle me, they have novels printed in ciphers." This



is what our good officer used to say as he confiscated the *Tables of Logarithms*.

Our mess at the school was the same as that of the soldiers at the barracks: army-bread, and bean alternating with lentil soup; it was the necessary without extra, as you see. The bringing in of all sorts of dainties was prohibited. Young people are greedy, and our minds were always strained in inventing new ways of smuggling. The door keeper, a most strict custom's man, seized everything that had the least resemblance to dainties; they were not taken with the idea of sending them back, but were retained by him, and the Lord knows how watchful he was!

Once a week we went into the forest of Fontainebleau, either to draw plans, or for the cannon manœuvres. The artillery officers or professors of mathematics with whom we were on those days, much more indulgent than the officers detailed to keep order in the school, permitted us to patronise a swarm of pastry-cooks and miscellaneous food venders who surrounded us with baskets filled with good things, the prices of which soared as the supply decreased.

Just as those who go outside of the barriers to get tipsy, we were unable to bring in anything fraudulently except in our stomachs. On returning we were always examined by piercing eyes, searched by clever hands, and the smugglers were punished. Nevertheless it was disagreeable, after having had poultry, *pâtés* and ham *ad libitum* during one day, to go back the next day to a dish of plain lentils. The difference was enormous, much too decided; to allow of its disappearing by gradual and insensible changes, and to prolong our gastronomic enjoyments, I invented the *pâtés de giberne*. This sublimity drew to me from my comrades the most flattering compliments and placed my name among those of the benefactors of the school.

You may or may not know how a *giberne* (cartridge-box) is constructed: it is a leather box containing a piece of wood pierced with holes to receive the cartridges. On leaving the school we had our guns and our cartridge-boxes, but they were empty. One day when, in the forest of Fontainebleau, I was negotiating with all proper seriousness a certain affair with a pastry boy, a

luminous idea struck me: the most ordinary men have at times flashes of genius. I took out the piece of wood of which I have just spoken; and showing it to the boy I told him to make *pâtés* for us having exactly the same shape. I notified all my comrades. The following week, everyone, before leaving, left the piece of wood pierced with holes under his bed, and we returned to the beat of drums, each with a smuggled *pâté* which we had the pleasure of concealing from the glances of all the custom's men of the school. We repeated this every week. During the time of my stay at Fontainebleau, the secret was well kept. I do not know what took place later, but as everything has an end in the best possible world, even the most useful things, the *pâtés de giberne* must have had their day of mourning.

Duels were frequent at the military school. Before I came there fighting was done with the bayonets, but a pupil having been killed, this weapon was suppressed. This was no hindrance: pieces of foils were procured, and if necessary compasses were fastened to the ends of sticks, all this to appear bold. When through a duel one had acquired

this title, and could add to it that of smoker, one was at the height of glory.

One fine day, during a review, General Bella-venne announced the names of those who the next day were to depart for the army. Oh! what emotion while he was reading his list! our hearts beat to bursting in our breasts. What joy among the chosen! what anxiety among those whose names had not yet been called! To put on an officer's coat, wear the epaulet, carry a sword, oh! what fine things when one is eighteen! We were privates; a moment after we became officers: a single word had produced this happy metamorphosis. Man is always a child, at all ages he needs a plaything; he often esteems himself according to the coat he wears; he is perhaps right, since the multitude judges according to the clothes. However that may be, with our second-lieutenant's epaulets, we considered ourselves something.

A captain of the school was detailed to conduct us to the Emperor's general headquarters. We travelled post, so we said; the fact is that we were piled by the dozen lots in wagons, and that by

going at a walking pace from morning until night we made two stages a day.

In all the towns, our greatest occupation was to have the sentinels present arms to us; nothing was so funny as the serious air and especially the indifference we affected when saluting them; all the old soldiers before whom we passed and re-passed ceaselessly must have made great sport of our childishness.

The ambition of each of us was to have a certain rakish air: we smoked, we drank liquor; we imagined that these good habits would give us a military appearance. Our clothes, our epaulets, everything was new, everything was fresh from the shop. We exposed them to the rain and the sun to give them something of the look of the bivouac. In spite of this, the buttons of the school, our beardless faces, betrayed us and Captain Dornier, who marched at our head, showed sufficiently that with our week-old epaulets, we were still but school-boys.

We travelled merrily, for we were young, without cares and full of hope. While going through

Prussia, then through Poland, then again through Prussia, now well, now badly, we always laughed.

It was at the birth-place of Copernicus, at Thorn, that we noticed that we were in the neighbourhood of Napoleon's army. That city, encumbered with men from almost all the regiments, had half of its houses transformed into hospitals. We were obliged to take lodgings in granaries or in stables; there was nothing available between the two. We were beginning to think that war might possibly not be the most beautiful thing in the world.

The army at that time occupied the cantonment which it had taken after the battle of Eylau, won by the French . . . and by the Russians, as they said.<sup>2</sup> Napoleon was at Finkenstein,<sup>3</sup> reviewing, repairing the losses of the month of February, imparting to all his extraordinary activity. It is there that for the first time I saw that astonishing man, of whom some have attempted to make a god, and whom certain imbeciles have called a fool. He has proved that he was neither one nor the other. The judgments passed on him to this day have been too close to the events to be free from partiality. For a long time to come it will be

impossible to write a good history of Napoleon; for such a thing to be, his contemporaries and their sons will have to be dead; enthusiasm cooled, hatred dead. Then, and not till then, a man free from prejudice, consulting the thousands of volumes already written and those to be, will be able to find truth in the well. Out of these materials, a monument shall arise superb, imperishable. To assist in this grand construction, I bring a grain of sand.





## THE BIVOUAC AND THE MARAUDERS



## CHAPTER II

### THE BIVOUAC AND THE MARAUDERS

Here we are in a beautiful plain, furrowed by artillery, trampled by cavalry; it has rained all day. It is here that we are going to sleep. The order is given; twenty men of each company are sent into the neighbouring villages to bring back wood, straw, supplies. Soon a curious sight presents itself before our eyes. "The market will be good," say the soldiers, "the dealers are coming." In fact, from all sides, we see hurrying forward our fearless freebooters loaded down with sacks full of poultry, baskets of eggs and loaves of bread stuck one after the other on ramrods. Some push before them sheep and cows, oxen and pigs; others make peasants, put in requisition, carry the straw and wood. Judging by the scowling faces of the peasants, by the interjections which escape them, one can easily see that they are not pleased, but

their words are drowned by the cries of the animals and by the soldiers' peals of laughter.

When one is at the bivouac, near the enemy, every man lies down fully dressed; each sleeps, one might say, with his eyes open; one must be ready for any emergency. Sometimes, we have remained in our boots for a month, which is, to say the least, very uncomfortable. Sometimes also, when lying down, the desire came over one to unbutton one's clothes; one loosened a buckle, then another, and it required more time to remedy this little disorder than if one had been entirely undressed. When the season is cold everyone lies about the fire; but one gets toasted on the one side, while being frozen on the other; one of course has the resource of turning around, but that is not at all easy.

When one happens to be in the second rank, one can then undress; less precautions are necessary. The officers have linen sacks in which they thrust themselves and which serve as sheets. As mattresses and feather beds are always replaced by bales of straw, the linen sack is much more agree-

able than the sheets: the seam allows nothing to get inside.

The time of awakening at the bivouac is never amusing; one has slept because one was tired; but on rising, the members of the body are benumbed, the moustaches, like tufts of lucern, have on each hair drops of dew; the teeth are clinched; one has to rub one's gums to re-establish the circulation.

Those who have never been to war will never be able to form an idea of the ills it brings with it. I shall not give a complete description of them, it would exceed the limit I have prescribed for myself. I shall only say a few words about our life at the bivouac and the waste which took place in the army. We lived on what the soldiers *found*, and living would have been impossible otherwise: our rapid marches prevented our stores, when we had stores, from following us. In rich countries, there were brought to the camp twenty times more provisions than it was possible to consume. The remainder was lost. The soldier lives from day to day; yesterday he lacked everything, to-day, if he has an abundance, he forgets the privations

of the evening before and does not worry about the morrow; nor does he consider that the following days other regiments will come to the position he is going to leave, that while taking what he requires it would be well to leave something to those who are to follow. . . . Not at all: one company of a hundred men has already killed two oxen; it is sufficient; after this there are found four cows, six calves, a dozen sheep: everything is pitilessly put to death, so as to eat the tongues, the kidneys, the brains. 'A cellar is entered wherein twenty casks stand in battle-array imposing and majestic: there are no tools to pierce them, but soldiers are never embarrassed; they fire gunshots through them, and soon twenty fountains of wine gush from all sides, to the loud peals of laughter of those present. Should a hundred casks be in the cellar they would have the same fate, for after all one must be able to taste the best.

Still another motive prompts certain soldiers to hunt for what they require to live: and while appearing to be looking for bread, they enter houses and succeed in taking possession of the owner's purse. Seeking for bread is an excellent pretext;

when they do not receive their rations regularly, it is impossible to prevent marauding. The chief reply of army plunderers is this: "I am hungry, I seek bread." There is no answer possible to this sentence. When it is impossible to give them bread, you must let them have their way. The horsemen have a double excuse: they are looking for fodder for their horses. A hussar was surprised by his captain while he was searching a wardrobe.

"What are you doing there?" asked the officer angrily.

"I am looking for oats for my horse."

"A good place to look for it!"

"I have already found in the library of this place a bale of hay surrounded by a thousand sheets of paper; why should I not find oats in this wardrobe?"

The worthy soldier had plundered the plant collection of an amateur botanist without seeing aught else in it than a bale of hay for his horse.

In every regiment, in every company, there existed determined marauders who travelled on the sides of the road, at two or three leagues from

the column. Sometimes they were attacked by the enemy; but it may be said that the intelligence of the French soldier equals his bravery. These gentlemen chose among themselves a dictator who commanded them, and often these improvised generals have fought serious battles and won victories.

When the English army of General Moore was retreating at Corunna,<sup>4</sup> our advance-guard, which was in pursuit, was much astonished to come across a stockaded village. The tricolor flag waved over the steeple, the sentinels wore the French uniform. Officers approached and soon were told that for three months two hundred marauders had occupied this village.

Cut off in their retreat, they had established themselves in this post and had fortified it. Often attacked, they had always repulsed the enemy. Their general in chief was a corporal; sovereign of this colony, his orders were obeyed like those of the Emperor. On entering the village the officers directed their steps towards the residence of the commander; he was on a hunt with his staff. Shortly after he returned and told his story, then



was seen what bravery combined with intelligence can do.

We were at the bivouac on a beautiful night; I was not asleep; seated by the fire, I was smoking my pipe by the side of the soldier in charge of the soup. While looking at the boiling billows, I noticed from time to time something black which passed above and disappeared immediately in the depths of the enormous kettle. This something excited my curiosity. I bravely drew my sword and stood there watching for the black spot in its passage; after having missed it several times, I finally caught it: it was one mouse, two mice, three mice, four mice. I awakened the cook.

“ Well! comrade, it appears that we have queerly seasoned soup to-day! ”

“ The same every day, lieutenant: potatoes and cabbage, I never vary.”

“ And the whole thing cooked in a decoction of mice. Here, look at the fine vegetables I have fished out of your kettle.”

“ Impossible, lieutenant.”

“ It is so very possible that it is true. Where the devil did you get your water? ”

“ In a vat, at the neighbouring village.”

“ Then you did not see what it contained? ”

“ It was dark, I felt that it was water, I took some to make my soup. Who would ever imagine that, in a vat at a peasant's, one would find a squadron of mice? ”

“ You might have poisoned the entire company, for if your vat is made of copper . . . .”

“ It is made of wood, I am sure of it, do not worry.”

“ All the same, you must throw away your soup and make some other.”

“ Impossible, lieutenant, I should not have the time. All those big fellows who are snoring about us will awaken shortly: their appetites will be awake before they are; and if by ill luck the soup were not ready, I should be rewarded by fifty kicks or so, you know where. I beg you, lieutenant, the mice are taken out, tell no one, the soup will be good all the same and all you will have to do is to eat with some other company.”

“ And what will you do? ”

“ I'll eat some.”

He did. Later he told me that he had never before tasted soup so good.

Now, this is how this accident had happened. In many farms in Germany, to get rid of mice, people make use of a vat half filled with water. A few small boards are placed on top. Bacon is placed on these, flour, any sort of bait. As soon as the mice walk on this bridge, a spring is set in motion, the board tips and the mice fall and are drowned. The spring is reset automatically: it is always ready to do its duty. It is from that sort of a reservoir that our bivouac *chef* had drawn the water of which he made so queer a soup. No one noticed anything; the soup was considered excellent.

Between the camp and the bivouac properly called there still exists something which is neither the bivouac, nor the camp. At the bivouac one sleeps entirely in the open air; at the camp one is in barracks well set in line; but in that something which takes after both, one finds oneself under small shelters which protect from the rain.

They are built only in places where it is expected

to remain some days: for a single night no such trouble is taken. This sort of shelter is simply a roof of straw on three walls of straw; the open part is the highest, the closed part is toward the wind. Each establishes himself as he pleases, selects the ground to his liking, and the whole presents a rather attractive picture.

In this sort of barrack it is impossible to stand, except perhaps near the entrance. One sleeps very well in them, but in the morning one must make one's toilet in the open air, which saves one from opening windows. What varied scenes a clever artist could sketch! But all of them would not find admission to the Louvre.

On the day of our arrival at Tilsit, there were rumours of a peace armistice; immediately the shelters were constructed solidly enough to resist the inclemencies of the season for a whole week. I was lying in the evening by the side of Laborie, my lieutenant, when we were visited by Héméré, sub-lieutenant of our regiment. I was beginning to fall asleep; his coming awoke me; but on hearing the turn taken by the conversation, I thought

it proper to pretend to sleep. This is the dialogue word for word; I shall never forget it:

“ Good evening, Laborie.”

“ Good evening, well! aren't you going to sleep? ”

“ Ah! yes, go to sleep, I have something else to do, faith! I'll be on foot all night.”

“ I understand that peace is about to be made, that the amnesty has even been signed, and I believe it, since the quartermaster and the musicians have arrived.”

“ Whether they make peace or war, will not change the fact that after having marched all day long, I still have a fine task for to-night.”

“ What is it? ”

“ The colonel is sending me out to look for a mill which stands six leagues from here. I have no one to show me the way; the villages are deserted, not a peasant to serve me as a guide. All I have been told is that the mill is called Brünsmühl. I have four wagon loads of grain to be ground; I am taking along some bakers to make bread and we shall bring it back here.”

“Good news, comrade; hurry, and above all try to put aside a few good loaves for me.”

“That goes without saying, but I came to see your map. I have been told that you had a map.”

“Yes, I have, and a fine one, too.”

“Shall we find the mill on it?”

“I should say so! Everything is on my map.”

Now, you must know that Laborie’s map had been picked up at the bivouac, among the various objects *found* by marauding soldiers. To give himself an air of importance, Laborie unfolded his map at every instant: we often gave one another the cue and as soon as he had folded it up, each on some pretext or other came along and made him unfold it again.

“Here is my map,” said Laborie as he spread it on the ground near the fire, and stretched himself flat on his stomach by its side; “what’s the name of your mill?”

“Brünsmühl.”

“Come . . . let us look for it . . . here, there is Berlin, here is Saint Petersburg, it must be between the two.”

"That's so, you must be right; yet I see no mill; it may have been forgotten."

"Forgotten! I tell you there's everything on my map."

"And I tell you that I do not see it."

"And yet it's large enough; hello, there it is."

And Laborie pointed out to Héméré the star of the winds printed on the margin, and whose four points were not unlike the wind-sails of a mill.

"Hello, why sure enough," said Héméré, admiring the superior knowledge of Laborie. "Do you think it is very far?"

"Why no, can't you see?"

And Laborie measured with his hand the distance from the mill to the intermediate point of Berlin and St. Petersburg. It was at most a foot.

"But what road shall I take to reach it?"

"You must admit that you're very stupid, the least thing troubles you; there's your mill: there, look at the map, the mill is there; well! on leaving this place, you turn to the right, go straight ahead, and if you walk fast, you will soon have reached it."

My conscience reproached me a little for allow-

ing this poor devil to spend the night running after the star of the winds. I was on the point of waking up, but M. Héméré was of a teasing disposition, a bit evil-tongued, clamouring against the young people, who had become officers without serving as he had in the army of Sambre-et-Meuse, and, faith, I resolved to abandon him to his fate, so as to make game of him in turn. I assure you that he was well received when he returned three days after with his wagons of wheat, and without having been able to locate his mill.



## THE MARCHES



## CHAPTER III

### THE MARCHES

We marched to the right, to the left, forward, sometimes backward; we marched all the time. Very often we knew not why; the bobbin which turns while unwinding its thread does not ask the machinist the reason of the movements through which it goes; it turns, that is all; we did as the bobbin. It was not always a pleasure, but the habit contracted, the necessity of obeying, the example which each set and witnessed, all that had turned us into machines; they go, we were going. When we stopped, the soldiers, all astonished, asked each other the reason.

“That’s funny,” they said, “the clock has stopped.”

On the morrow of the first bivouac of a campaign, he who saw the enormous quantity of breeches, long black and white gaiters, collars, stockings, covering the plain where we had slept,

might have imagined that the enemy having surprised us during the night, we had run away in our shirts. You will perhaps not be sorry to know why all these breeches were left there, empty and forsaken.

Formerly a soldier received gratis a pair of breeches which he seldom wore; he was made to pay for a pair of trousers which he always wore. The contractors for linens and foot-gear, speculators aiming at consummation, stuffed the knapsacks with long white and black gaiters, stockings, black and white collars, things useful solely to those who sold them. In the garrison, the soldiers had to keep all these effects under pain of being compelled to buy others the next day. But at the first bivouac, on beginning a campaign, each one reduced his knapsack to the smallest possible size by ridding it of all useless articles.

The military administration has made immense progress since peace was declared. To-day the soldier receives a pair of cloth trousers, and it is a great improvement: the breeches no longer exist. I have never been able to understand why under Napoleon, when we were always at war, the sol-

diers should have been dressed in the disgraceful breeches which, squeezing his leg, prevented him from walking freely. Beside this, the knee, covered by a long gaiter which buttoned above, was again squeezed by a strap which held tight the strap fastening the breeches. Underneath this an under garment held by a string added to the hindrance to the legs. All told, there were three thicknesses of cloth, two rows of buttons superposed, and three straps bound to paralyse the efforts of the most dauntless walkers.

In 1806, Napoleon had adopted white clothes for the infantry; all the recruits coming from France were dressed as clowns; which made a very ugly combination when they found themselves mingled with other soldiers dressed in blue. It was a very strange idea to give white clothes to troops destined to pass their lives in the bivouac.<sup>5</sup> You should have seen how dirty these young fellows were; accordingly the first time that the Emperor saw them, the counter-order was given, the white clothes were withdrawn. This did not hinder the promoters of the Restauration from again trying the experiment in 1815. They at least

had an excuse; they wanted to do as before. But the Emperor, who always made us sleep in the open air, how could he ever imagine that he would have a beautiful army with soldiers dressed as clowns?

The Imperial Guard was magnificent and rendered great services when it fought. This should not astonish; it was recruited in the picked companies of our regiments. For this guard were taken the strongest and bravest men, who already had four years of service and two campaigns. What could one not expect from a company of such soldiers!—it was formed of the pick of the picked. The soldiers of the line called those of the Guard the immortals because they seldom fought.<sup>6</sup> They were reserved for grand occasions and that was proper, no doubt, for the arrival of the Imperial Guard on the battlefield almost always decided the question. Between the line and the Guards, there existed a jealousy which was the cause of many quarrels. Everyone knows that each member of the Guard had the rank immediately above the one he occupied. In the line all cried against this privilege and all did their

utmost to acquire it. Those who had obtained it considered it perfectly natural: they could not imagine how petty officers of the line could have the stupendous pretension to march as equals with the Imperial Guard. Such is man, and thus he will remain until the end of the ages. When in France the question of equality has come up, everyone wanted it with those ranking above him, but not with the others.

“I am the equal of the Montmorencys, the street-sweeper is not my equal”; that is what many people had said to themselves. People have cried against titles and decorations; and after having taken them from those who had them, they loaded themselves down with them. How many austere republicans have we not seen become chamberlains, tribunes become peers of France, who without the slightest ceremony exchanged the title of citizen for that of Monsieur le Duc or Serene Highness.

We were on the march; a baggage-wagon drawn by four mules tried to cross the line of my regiment, and the soldiers successively passing before the noses of these poor beasts took a mischievous

delight in preventing them from advancing because they belonged to the Imperial Guard; one of the soldiers exclaimed in a bantering tone:

“Come, soldiers of the line, make way for the mules of the Guard.”

“Bah!” replied another, “they are donkeys.”

“I tell you they are mules.”

“And I, that they are donkeys.”

“Well! suppose they are, what difference does it make? Do you not know that in the Guards donkeys have the rank of mules?”

The Imperial Guard, at first composed of old regiments of grenadiers and of chasseurs, had been increased by fusileers, and then to these were added sharpshooters, flanking troopers and cadets. The organisation of this corps was exceptional. The old regiments were members of the old Guard and the others of the young Guard. Superior officers and captains had been taken from the first to form the second; they retained their ranks and prerogatives, while the lieutenants and sub-lieutenants stood about where they did in the line, excepting for the uniform of the Guard which they had the honor of wearing. There existed therefore an



enormous disproportion between the captain and the lieutenant as to rank in the army and pay. In the regiments of flanking troopers, who wore the green uniform, the captains and superior officers wore the blue uniform of the old Guard, which produced a singular combination.

In creating new regiments, the administration had exhausted all denominations, even to making grenadiers recruits of the Imperial Guard. These words *Imperial Guard* and *recruits* sounded badly; they seemed astonished at finding themselves together. The officers of this body gloried in the first of these titles, but they admitted the second with difficulty.

On their baggage-wagons could be read in letters two feet high: Imperial Guard, regiment of Grenadiers, then in pica letters the word recruits abridged to RCS seemed to be ashamed of being in such fine company. From that time these young grenadiers were called nothing but RCS. This denomination became proverbial. RCS was synonymous to recruit. "You're only an RCS," said the soldiers to each other in a dispute, and I have even heard officers say seriously: "We are

going to have from France a detachment of RCS."

Napoleon is the one man who knew best how to make an army march. These marches were frequently very painful, sometimes half of the soldiers remained behind, but as willingness was not lacking in them, they reached their destination later, but they reached it. Nothing so annoys them as a badly given order, badly understood and which makes them walk more than they should; that is what they call *marcher pour les capucins*.

Or else when some hesitation causes them to remain a few moments on the same spot without knowing if they are to stay or go, that is called *droguer*. A French army is always in good humour when fighting; but her best soldiers are good for nothing when they *droguent* or *marchent pour les capucins*.

Demand of them all possible efforts; they will obey without a murmur; but see that your orders are positive, well worded, properly transmitted. In the contrary case, they will send the general to all the devils. Frederick II was saying one day, and M. de Montazet, a general in the service of Austria, who was a prisoner at Berlin, heard it

and repeats it in his Memoirs: "If I commanded Frenchmen, I should make of them the best troops in the four quarters of the world. Overlook a few slight blunders, never annoy them unseasonably, encourage the natural gaiety of their minds, be just to them, even to scruple, do not trouble them with any trifles, such should be my secret to render them invincible."

After the campaign of 1809, we were cantoned in the neighbourhood of Passau, on mountains covered with six feet of snow. It was another universe, a new Siberia; we might have said as the soldier who, on the heights of the Tyrol, wrote to his parents: "We have reached the end of the world; at a hundred paces from our camp, the earth ends, with our hands we can touch the sun." It would have been the more difficult for us to touch the sun, as it was invisible. In this charming country of wolves, the layers of snow piled one on the other become so hard that it is impossible to bury the dead during the winter; they are put on the roofs while waiting for the thaw, what a thaw, good gracious! what an ocean of mud! each gutter becomes a river, each road a torrent.

We were very quiet in our villages, when we received, one fine night, the order to leave at once to assemble at Passau. The south wind had been melting the snows for several days; nothing could give an idea of the difficulty we had in climbing, and descending all these flooded mountains. A painter who might wish to portray a scene of the deluge should visit that country under similar circumstances. The aides de camp, the estafettes, the orderlies on foot and on horseback crossed each other in every direction to hurry the detachments which they met. We had to be at Passau dead or alive at break of day. Officers and soldiers, everybody thought that war had begun again; what other motive could be given for this hurried march in times of peace!

In proportion as a company, a fraction of a company arrived at Passau, officers designated by the general embarked it on the Danube, which rolled mountains of water. The current was so increased by the melting of the snows that we reached the right shore only by going several leagues out of our way. Artillery horses fell in the water, boats upset, men perished. When we

had crossed the Danube, we continued on our way without a moment's rest; we marched during forty hours. "But why are we running this way?" said the soldiers; "what's going on that nothing should stop us, neither night, torrents, nor rivers?" Finally we knew the motives of this forced march, the longest, the most painful ever made, even during the war: we had to go to Braunau, to render military honours to Marie-Louise who was coming to France to marry Napoleon. Judging from the manner we were hurried along, it seemed as if the Empress was waiting for us. . . . We arrived two weeks ahead of time.

On the frontier of Bavaria and Austria, near the village of Saint-Pierre, not far from Braunau,<sup>7</sup> architects who had come from Paris had constructed a superb barrack; it is there that Marie-Louise was handed over by the plenipotentiaries of Emperor Francis to those of Napoleon appointed to receive her. The Queen of Naples, and the prince of Neuchâtel had arrived with an army of chamberlains, ladies in waiting, equerries, valets in all colours, of all ranks, of all kinds, in short all the bootless (*débotté*). These people are no

doubt indispensable, for swarms of them are to be found under all régimes and in all countries; an army of fifty thousand men could be set on foot with what the bootless of a sovereign cost. When Her Majesty appeared, the artillery made a terrific noise, the music of the regiments played out of tune; the drums rumbled dully, for it was pouring, we had mud to our knees, and the Paris journals went into ecstasies on the good fortune we had had of being the first to salute our august and gracious sovereign.

And yet this is the way history is written. The next day the Empress left for Paris; we again took by short stages the road to our mountains, trying to persuade ourselves that we had had a very good time.

To reach the battlefield of Austerlitz, the third army corps marched forty leagues in thirty-six hours, that is to say that the twentieth part of the soldiers arrived, the rest came in from hour to hour; officers left on the road picked up the stragglers, and after a few moments' rest, they directed them towards their regiments. This rapid march was very painful for the soldiers; they did not com-





ALEXANDER FIRST OF RUSSIA.





plain, for they felt its necessity, because it had a great influence on the result of the day. On the contrary, our run on Braunau became for them a subject of continuous complaint and of grumbling. It was the topic of comparison every time they feared to march uselessly, or *marcher pour les capucins*: "It is just as when we went to Braunau," they said. This march of thirty-six hours on Austerlitz, without a moment's rest, was of great importance. An officer taken prisoner was questioned by Alexander.

"To what army corps do you belong?"

"The third."

"Marshal Davout's?"

"Yes, sire."

"That is not true, that corps is at Vienna."

"It was there yesterday, to-day it is here."

Emperor Alexander was astonished at this news.

Night marches tire the most; the greatest need of man is sleep. Pichegru paid thirty thousand francs for a night of rest during which he was arrested. Sometimes the soldiers slept standing on the march, a stumble made them fall into a ditch one on top of the other.

In Bavaria and in Austria, there are many bees, consequently much wax is gathered; the soldiers found quantities of it at the peasants'. In the night marches, in calm weather, each man lit two, three, four candles, some carried as many as fifteen or twenty. Nothing was so pretty as the sight of a division thus illuminated, as it climbed a hill by a winding road; all these thousands of moving lights presented a charming spectacle. The merry fellow of the company sang sentimental songs and everybody joined in the chorus. Farther off, another related the endless story of *La Ramée* who, after having obtained his leave, returned from home and travelled two hundred leagues to claim a ration of bread from his sergeant-major. *La Bruyère* has ascribed to *Ménalque* all the examples of absent-mindedness he ever knew; the soldiers ascribe to *La Ramée* all the stories of old troopers; *La Ramée* is the type of the French soldier.

At two leagues from Neubourg, the regiments which were marching along, carrying their arms as they pleased, suddenly close their ranks; the drums beat a salute, the soldiers fall into a regular solemn step, the officers salute with their swords;

a witness would think that he beheld a parade at the Tuileries. Why all these honours? They are addressed to the first grenadier of the Republic, to La Tour d'Auvergne! <sup>8</sup>

His tomb, standing near the road, is always saluted by the regiments of all nations; it is known by the name: *Tomb of the Hero*. It is built of stone and bears the following inscription:

À LA MÉMOIRE  
DE LA TOUR D'AUVERGNE  
PREMIER GRENADIER DE L'ARMÉE  
TUÉ LE VIII MESSIDOR AN VIII  
DE L'ÈRE RÉPUBLICAINE

On the opposite side may be read:

À LA MÉMOIRE  
DE FORTIS DE LA 46<sup>E</sup> DEMI-BRIGADE  
TUÉ LE VIII MESSIDOR AN VIII  
DE L'ÈRE RÉPUBLICAINE

Fortis was La Tour d'Auvergne's colonel; they died together at the very spot where their tomb stands. While we were protecting the Confeder-

ation of the Rhine, this modest monument, respected by all, was cared for by the town of Neubourg. I like to think that no change has occurred: the hero of heroes should be honoured in all the countries of the world.

La Tour d'Auvergne was the most brave among the brave; his disinterestedness and his modesty equalled his bravery. At the moment that his body was being laid in the tomb, it is reported that one of the grenadiers turned it in the direction of Neubourg saying: "Dead he must be placed as he was when living, always facing the enemy."

His heart was embalmed, enclosed in a box of silver-gilt, and carried by the oldest grenadier in his company. It was a second flag for all the soldiers of the 46th *demi-brigade*. The consuls of the Republic ordered that the name of La Tour d'Auvergne should be always at the head of the roll of the company of which he had been a member. The sergeant-major, at each roll-call, began with the name of La Tour d'Auvergne; the oldest grenadier would immediately reply: "Died on the field of honour."

Ordinarily, in the army, the subordinates inherit

the ranks and titles of their chiefs, but on the death of La Tour d'Auvergne, it was the contrary: his captain was proclaimed first grenadier of the Republic by the soldiers of the 46th *demi-brigade*; later events have proven that he was worthy of this high distinction. This captain was Cambronne.

When you see a regiment marching rapidly on the highway, you believe perhaps that nothing is more easy than to direct it. At the command of *march*, it starts, you say, and if it walks a long time straight ahead, it finally reaches its destination. A colonel who should take no other care would leave behind half the soldiers of his regiment. The non-commissioned officer who marches ahead must have a short and regular step, for if the right walks at an ordinary pace, the left will gallop. The slightest obstacle to be found on the road were it only a rut to cross, causes all the soldiers of the last battalion to run if they wish to make up their distance. If the first which meets the obstacle slows down for only a half second, the last will have to gallop for a quarter of an hour. An experienced chief sees these things at a glance,

he orders a short halt, and everything is restored to its accustomed course. When a regiment has walked for an hour, it stops five minutes to light pipes, this is called the *halt of the pipes*. A soldier should be deprived of no pleasure; for many this pleasure is even a need; in the middle of the day, there is the long halt which lasts an hour, each one lunches on what he has in his knapsack, then the march is resumed with a halt of five minutes between each league.

To appreciate all these things, one must live with the soldier, one must see him at all hours, one must be with him under all circumstances. The officers of the ancient régime were quite as brave as those of the new, but seeing their soldiers only on battle days, at the King's review, to at once return to Versailles, they were totally ignorant of these most important details. Had they known them, I greatly doubt if they would have bothered with them; their concern was to arrive at the army by post, the eve of a battle; none ever failed to be there.

Many women followed their husbands in the army,<sup>9</sup> either because they did not wish to be sep-

arated from them out of conjugal affection, or because their modest fortune did not permit of keeping up two households. However, when we entered on a campaign, they remained behind at the garrison; but as soon as peace was made, they were seen coming by wagon loads. These ladies travelled in cabriolets, barouches, wagons, or walked with the baggage-vans; chaste ears must have daily heard very improper conversations; eyes must have seen strange sights. In Germany, these ladies who followed the army lived in a rather agreeable manner: no danger existed for them; but in Spain things were very different. Travelling along the road, they were, as we were, exposed to gun shots, and when their escort, falling in an ambush, placed them at the mercy of Spanish brigands, they suffered the most infamous treatment. At the Salinas engagement, the wife of one of the battalion chiefs gratified the brutality of two hundred *guerilleros*. . . . She died as a result of the attack; others whom I know did not die.

In a skirmish near Burgos, the wife of an officer of my acquaintance had had her carriage broken,



and she was consequently compelled to follow on foot. She was soon overcome by fatigue; the perspiration ran down her forehead, her delicate members could no longer carry her body; it was impossible for her to walk a step farther. The good husband was in despair to see his wife in such a sorry state.

"Poor Laura," he said to me, "she will die on the road if I can not find a carriage, a mule, a horse, to carry her."

"We shall find none to-day; but it seems to me that I've noticed in the rear-guard a soldier leading a donkey, and if you could induce him to sell it, or else lend it to you . . ."

"Yes, you are right, you're a friend of mine, you . . . Where is that soldier? . . . Where is that donkey? I would give fifty *louis* for a donkey, I must have a donkey for Laura; poor Laura, how tired she is!"

"She can go no further."

"I would give a hundred *louis* for a donkey. Money is made to use, and what do I care about money if Laura is suffering? Let us go and look up that donkey."



"I believe you'll get it much cheaper."

"What do I care if it's dear, so long as I find a donkey? But where shall we find it?"

"In the rear-guard; I believe it belongs to a marauder who is in hiding. Let us allow the regiment to pass; let us wait, we shall soon have what we are looking for."

"Come, Laura, a little courage; walk on, I shall soon return."

Little by little the column passes before us, the rear-guard appears, and we see a footsoldier who was leading by the bridle the long-eared animal, on which he had placed, on one side his knapsack, and on the other his gun to act as a counter-balance.

"Ah! there it is at last, the donkey I seek. I say, soldier, my wife is ill, she can no longer walk, you must sell me your donkey."

"Willingly, captain."

"How much do you want for it?"

"Twenty francs."

"Are you joking? Twenty francs! twenty francs! and for a stolen donkey, for you have stolen it, and you deserve that I denounce you to the general in chief."

"But, captain, I have not stolen it; I found it, while going through the last village."

"Yes, found, found. I'm not to be imposed upon."

"Even though I had stolen it, you should be very glad, since you are in need of it."

"Come now, here are two one hundred sous pieces; give me your donkey."

"Oh! no, I want twenty francs."

"Well! choose between my two one hundred sous pieces, or a complaint to the general in chief."

"All right, take my donkey."

"My friend," said he to me, "it's devilish dear, ten francs for a stolen donkey! But, never mind, money is made to circulate."

## THE CANTEEN-WOMEN



## CHAPTER IV

### THE CANTEEN-WOMEN

It was a fine profession, that of canteen-woman. These ladies usually began by following a soldier who had inspired them with some tender sentiments. At first they were seen trudging along on foot with a keg of brandy slung over the shoulder. A week after they were comfortably seated on a *found* horse. To the right, to the left, in front, behind, kegs, Bologna sausage and cheese, cleverly arranged, held one another in equilibrium. The month never ended without a van with two horses, filled with provisions of all sorts, being there to testify to the growing prosperity of their industry. It often happened that a party of Cossacks plundered these ladies when travelling in the rear of the army; then they began all over again, and soon everything was as before.

An officer could give them no greater pleasure than to borrow money from them: the prospect of

a few insolvent debtors was to them much less fearful than the Cossacks and the bands of stragglers who frequently relieved them of their *écus*. They were thieves who robbed other thieves; such things are seen occasionally in this world.

In camp, the canteen-woman's tent serves as a company parlor; a tap-room, a coffee-house; it is the central gathering point. One plays, drinks, smokes there; for what can one do in a camp when one's sole baggage is a *porte-manteau* as big as a sausage and, consequently, no books? On the first day of my arrival, I was taken to the canteen-woman in fashion then, and I there found thirty officers ready to play a game of *lotos*. Although this game is not very difficult, and although it does not require a great effort of the mind to follow its skilful combinations, I was ignorant of the way to call out the numbers: long had the winning numbers come out, but I had as yet marked nothing. This is why: it is the custom in the army to call numbers by periphrasis; a fine is imposed on the one who dares use any other technical denomination. I shall give a few examples: 1 is called the beginning of the world; 2, the little hen; 4,

the commissary's hat; 5, the shoemaker's awl; 7, the gallows; 33, the two hunchbacks; 89, the Revolution; 90, our grandfather. I set myself to studying and I soon became strong enough to play my game.

Laborie, of whom I have already spoken, thought very little of young officers graduated from military schools. My ignorance surprised him greatly.

"What the devil did you learn anyway at Fontainebleau?"

"Mathematics."

"What else?"

"History."

"What else?"

"Drill."

"What else?"

"Fortification, drawing, . . ."

"But do you do any of this?" said he to me, placing himself on guard, as if to make a pass at me.

"Oh, some."

"My dear, that's what you need; all the rest is good for nothing, it's nonsense."

The worthy fellow was quite right, for his intelligence did not go beyond a bottle or a tobacco pipe. To give you an idea of it, I shall tell you that one day I found him reading the "Tales" of Marmontel; there were hardly more than two hundred pages missing from the middle of the volume. This solution of continuity brought together the end of "*Annette and Lubin*" and the beginning of "*Laurette*." Laborie continued his reading without noticing the deficit; the characters, the action, the location of the scene, all was changed; Laborie saw nothing but black on white.

The canteen-women rendered great services to the army, while making their own fortunes; they were useful in certain circumstances. These women, endowed with uncommon energy, were tireless; they defied the heat, the cold, the rain and the snow like old grenadiers, they went all over to secure the component parts necessary to their trade. Those who have never lacked anything indispensable to life, can not imagine of what importance is a bottle of wine, a glass of brandy at certain moments.



A well trained canteen-woman always had a small reserve for the officers; she kept that for the grand days, which more than doubled the importance of the service. What a happiness, in fact, when one finds oneself in ploughed land, wet to the skin, and expects to go to bed without supper, to find near at hand a good fire, a slice of ham or a bowl of hot wine; or both, which certainly is better still!

That cost dearly sometimes, but money is good only to get what one needs. When one can no longer exchange its representative value for bread, gold is not worth so much as iron. In the campaign of Russia, the soldiers passed in front of the treasury vans, abandoned on the road, without touching an *écu*, because there was no baker in the neighbourhood. The great thing in this world is bread, it is the stomach whose periodical demands must always be listened to. Before it, passions, interests are silent; satisfy it first, you will think of the rest afterwards.

Many canteen-women were as brave as old grenadiers. That of my company, Theresa, carried brandy to the soldiers in the midst of shots and

shells; she was wounded twice. Do not believe that the hope of gain made her face dangers, it was a nobler sentiment, since on days of battle she asked for no money. In her disputes with other women, Theresa triumphed by reproaching them for not daring to do as she. With all these generous sentiments, Mme. Fromageot was terribly homely; but few women, judging from what I have seen (*honni soit qui mal y pense*) have had so fine a leg.

It was rather amusing to see these ladies dressed in gowns of velvet and satin *found* by soldiers, and who had sold them in consideration of a few glasses of brandy. The remainder of the attire was not in keeping, for riding-boots and a foraging-cap completed it in a rather grotesque manner. Imagine, now, some buxom woman thus attired, astride a horse flanked by two enormous baskets, and you will have an idea of the queer sight which all this presented.

These ladies were delivered, along the road, at the foot of a tree, continued on their way, and the mother and child were in good health. They never had vapours, nor attacks of the nerves, and

never did barley water nor tea of any kind moderate in them the fires produced by alcoholic liquors. On this diet they enjoyed an iron constitution; I should like to have the ladies' physicians of Paris reason on this matter.

In the cities we did not bother with the canteen-women, they were left in the barracks to live with the soldiers; if we met them on the streets, we did not deign to look at them. But in camp, it was altogether different; one then had a certain consideration for them, the homeliest became almost pretty; thus does a famished hunter devour with delight the piece of dry bread he by chance finds at the bottom of his game-bag.

Laborie spent at the canteen all the time which the military service did not require of him; he never failed to say, as he sat in front of a bottle of wine or his glass of brandy: "Ah! we are better here than at Eylau." This battle of Eylau always came up in his conversation, it served as a subject of comparison, it was for him the superlative of misery. No one could have any merit in the estimation of Laborie if he had not fought in the plain of Eylau. We received the *Journal de*

*l'Empire*; one day, after having read it, I said to Laborie:

“ I see a work announced for which I am going to send.”

“ What is it? ”

“ *Le Précis de la Géographie Universelle.* ”

“ Who wrote that? ”

“ Malte-Brun.”

“ Who is that Malte-Brun? ”

“ He is one of our best geographers.”

“ To what regiment does he belong? ”

“ He is not a soldier, he is a man of learning, a man of great merit; he lives in Paris.”

“ He's a great bird, your Malte-Brun! I should have liked to see him at Eylau with his geography and snow up to his knees, with his science and no bread, with his merit and nothing to drink. He should have been there, we would have seen if he would have written books.”

We had in the army canteen-women who, through their bravery and the talents of their husbands, had risen very high in the world. Some were called Madame la baronne, others Madame la générale; some even, on awaking one fine morn-



Napoleon at the Battle of Eylau.





ing, had found themselves Madame la duchesse. I have known some who were bored in their splendid parlours, and regretted the animated and eventful lives which they formerly led.

I have known others who, in fine carriages drawn by four horses, considered it very improper to have their progress delayed by new *débutantes* perched on a stubborn horse between two kegs. They forgot that formerly the meeting of a fine carriage annoyed them just as much. One evening, at Fontainebleau, the French comedians had just played the *Mariage de Figaro*, in the presence of the Emperor. When the curtain had fallen, Maréchal Lannes exclaimed:

“When I think that formerly I almost had myself trampled on and smothered to see that comedy! Well! to-day, I see nothing amusing in it.”

“That’s because,” replied Napoleon, “at that time you were in the pit, and now you are in the first boxes.”

And the Emperor was certainly right, but it is probable that that play had been murdered a bit by the artists of the camp.





## THE LODGINGS



## CHAPTER V

### THE LODGINGS

In general, the place we liked best was precisely that which we left the soonest and *vice versa*. It was for us a very rare thing when the higher orders agreed with our preferences. One day in a château, the next day in a hut, we were more in contact with the inhabitants of a country than he who leaves one inn to go to another. People will find in this chapter a few observations of customs taken on the spot, from day to day, among the different peoples we have visited. It is by lodging with other men, by dining with them, that one succeeds in knowing them.

The soldiers travelling in France receive a billet for lodgings which entitles them to a place near the fire and the light (*place au feu et à la chandelle*); therefore our Romans of the Empire prefer Germany to France. Among the good Ger-

mans <sup>10</sup> they found their dinner ready, their pay remained intact and could serve for other purposes: a little drop, tobacco and the rest. In Spain it was frequently worse than in France; they found at their hosts' neither fire nor light.

So as to have themselves well served, the soldiers had a singular method. Living several together, they agreed on the part they each had to play before entering the peasant's house. One of them played the ugly fellow; he swore, stormed, drew his sword and threatened every one. The women were frightened, and sometimes the men also. The master of the house came; then the other comrades acted the good apostles, said that the blusterer was the best fellow in the world, but that one had to know how to take him.

"He is fond of good food, good wine; he can't help it; that's his way. When he is served to his liking, he is as gentle as a lamb, as a new-born babe, but when he receives only potatoes to eat or bad beer, he becomes terrible; none of us and even all combined could prevent him from doing something awful. For example, only yesterday, no later than yesterday, at eight leagues from here,

this veritable demon set fire to the house of a peasant who had been so rude as to put water in the wine he gave us. We don't want to excuse him, but our comrade was not in the wrong, you should never deceive anyone. Reflect . . . see . . . doing things conscientiously . . . let the dinner be good, the drinks choice, and don't worry about the rest, we answer for everything."

These speeches, amplified, paraphrased by the squad, usually made a great impression; the host complied with good grace; our jolly dogs asked for nothing better and everything went along smoothly. These comedy scenes were often acted by officers, but the occasion seldom presented itself, for it was rare that in the same lodgings there should be a sufficient number to permit of distributing the parts.

We were not beloved in Germany; far from it. The passing of the regiments was an enormous burden on the country. Our army was hated as a whole, but the individuals were liked. The jovial, frank and open character of the French easily won for them the friendship of good Germans, who are generally serious. In spite of the hatred of

one people for another, it was rare if one hour after his arrival, the French soldier who made an effort to please, was not on as good terms with his host as if he had known him for ten years. Share their tastes, smoke, drink beer, the Germans will like you. And then they had been so often told that the French were devils, that when they had to deal with well bred people nothing was spared to show the delight they felt!

In Spain, the individuals were no better liked than the whole. During a general uprising, a Spaniard would have murdered a Frenchman sleeping under his roof; a German would have saved him. Almost everywhere in Germany, I was well received; almost everywhere I have been asked to come back, if chance should give me the opportunity.

When we had arrived at a lodging, officer, sub-lieutenant or private, everybody thought of paying court to the lady or daughter of the house; often this served no purpose, sometimes they were successful, in any case it was good to keep in practice.

My captain was married, but he willingly for-

got it; I have known many officers who, under certain circumstances, had no better memories. In all these lodgings, they passed themselves off as bachelors; if they saw a young girl, they immediately made love to her, spoke of marriage, and occasionally they were listened to. Marriage! you know that this is a magic word for a maid; a man whom she would not deign to look upon as a man, she considers with good will as soon as she believes him susceptible to making a husband. A husband! it is a great affair, every day this sweet word comes in the mind of young persons. As a kaleidoscope, their imagination makes them take on all forms, they build on the subject many castles in Spain, and the Lord knows how often they are disappointed.

However that may be, my captain caused himself to be listened to by means of this little untruth, and I who almost had a proposal ready, but did not possess the face of a marrying man, was frequently repulsed with loss, although I was twenty years younger than my rival. The respect of which I have always made profession in favor of good morals, conjugal fidelity, and perhaps a

bit of jealousy, made me contrive a means of supplanting him. As soon as my man began to play the gallant:

“ Captain,” I said to him aloud, “ the baggage-master has just arrived, I believe that he has a letter from your wife.”

“ Keep quiet,” he would whisper.

But I pretended not to understand and I continued bravely:

“ Napoleon, your oldest son (all officers’ sons were called Napoleon), must be big; he must be progressing, he is a very intelligent boy; is he still at the Antwerp College? ”

“ What is that to you? ”

“ And little Hortense (all officers’ daughters were called Hortense; later they took the name of Marie-Louise), is little Hortense as mischievous as ever? ”

“ That will do, that’s enough, it’s none of your business.”

“ *Ma foi*, it is mighty fine to be married, to have children, one sees one’s self again as one used to be; this bachelor’s life is often very dull and I



have never been so inclined to abandon it as I am to-day."

Immediately the young lady's answers to the captain became cooler, soon she no longer looked at him; he was married, consequently, he was a useless being. All the ground he lost, I gradually gained and sometimes I have profited by these indiscretions.

A country in which we were both very comfortable and the extreme opposite, was Poland: indigence and luxury, that's what one finds at every step. The villages are frightfully filthy, in every peasant's house there is a room, or to speak more accurately, a stable wherein sleep the cow, the horses, the hens, etc.; one-fourth of the room is taken up by an immense bed which serves for the entire family. The father, the mother, the daughter, the son-in-law all sleep there together, on straw and very much as a litter of pigs. Go out of this hovel wherein you have left nature in its primitive state, go to the château, you will find there all the refinements of civilisation: a choice library, all the polish of well bred people, an agree-

able conversation, all the comforts it is possible to have in Poland. A voyage in that country is a perpetual succession of antitheses.

In truth, the Polish nobles spend eleven months of the year in their châteaux. They live there very economically, but they make up for this at the time of carnival and at Saint-John's feast; they then go to Warsaw, to Posen, to Cracow. There, everyone makes a ruinous display; the dinners, the fêtes succeed each other from day to day; the streets are encumbered with superb carriages, high gambling is indulged in; finally, the travellers return home and seek to re-establish the equilibrium of their finances by making the peasants work.

This château life is not very agreeable in Poland; each family is isolated in each village; the roads being horribly bad, people can visit one another only when it freezes very hard or during the summer. I do not advise the professional gastronomists to go to Poland to take a practical course in the sublime meditations of Brillat-Savarin. Nowhere, except in the cities, is there to be found a butcher or a baker; the nobleman must have at home all that is necessary to animal life.

An ox which has to be killed supplies the family with fresh meat for three days and salt meat for three months, thus it is with everything else.

In Poland, I have seen young ladies with the strange habit of sticking on their faces very black pear seeds; this resembled the patches with which our ladies formerly decorated themselves, and set off the whiteness of their complexions.

"I am astonished," said I to one of these, "that you should succeed in placing your seeds on the same spot as the day before."

"But I never take them off."

"Then you do not wash your face?"

"What's the use? My face is always clean."

At Warsaw, one-half of the inhabitants is composed of foreigners, and specially Germans. The Polish Jews exclusively, or almost exclusively, do business there; they are inn-keepers, merchants, tailors, shoemakers; the Germans are doctors, surgeons, apothecaries, lawyers; the Poles themselves are either nobles or peasants, slaves or lords; in that country no intermediate class exists.

The society of Warsaw is very much like that of Paris; its women are very gracious and in no

way inferior to our charming compatriots. They follow French fashions and affect Parisian customs. The Poles speak nothing but French even among themselves; it is very bad form in Warsaw to speak Polish, unless one addresses servants. The Polish language is banished from good society as the Provençal *patois* is in Marseilles. The study of foreign languages serves as a basis for the education of the Poles of both sexes. They are quite right in learning the languages of other peoples for no one, to my mind, will be tempted to learn theirs. I have tried to do so, but how can one succeed in pronouncing words which have four or five consonants one after the other?

In the cantonments occupied by the French army, the inhabitants were compelled to clean the streets, and it was the most vexatious task one could give them. Still these peasants, dirty, indolent, become very fit and brave soldiers. In their peasant clothes they look beastly, stupid, dull, but as soon as they have put on a uniform and they have been limbered up in the regiment, they are different beings. From beasts they become men, proud, fit,

intelligent, and they are not one bit inferior to the soldiers of the most civilised nations.

The Polish horses are small, they are harnessed four abreast (these *Konia* are excellent and very fast), they feed on anything given them, even old straw which has seen service on the roofs of houses. They have been able to resist all the privations that are experienced in war, while our handsome Normandy horses were like skeletons when they had gone without oats for two weeks. The carriages *de luxe* have two horses abreast; they usually have four or six horses. The traces are of excessive length. At Warsaw, a four-horse carriage takes up more space than that of the King in Paris when it has eight horses. This mode of travelling is rather pompous, it is for that reason that the Poles have adopted it; they are fond of all that glitters and presents an appearance of magnificence; their servants are covered with braid, in imitation gold, it is true, but from a distance no one would know the difference. It is specially in winter that the Poles display great luxury in their equipages. One sees sleighs of all shapes; horses laden with bells, servants wrapped

in furs, present a singular sight. In summer, the north of Europe resembles our southern countries, but in winter it has an aspect particular to itself.

In Poland, the roads are not paved; the trouble has been taken of tracing them through the forests, that is all. During the winter, and when the French army tracked over that country in all directions, we encountered oceans of mud which it was impossible to cross. The mud of Pultusk has become unhappily celebrated: <sup>11</sup> mounted men have been drowned in it with their horses, others have been seen to blow out their brains, despairing of ever getting out.

Speaking of the mud of Pultusk, I shall tell the sad adventure of an officer of engineers. He found himself stuck in mud up to the neck and could not get out. A grenadier appeared:

“Comrade,” calls out the officer, “come to my aid, I am lost, I am drowning, the mud will soon choke me. . . .”

“Who are you?”

“I am an officer of engineers.”

“Ah! you’re one of those who solve problems; well! draw your plan.”

And the grenadier went on his way. The soldiers did not like the officers of engineers, because they never saw them fighting with the bayonet. They found it difficult to understand that one could render services to the army with a pencil and compass, and they resembled Laborie, who did not believe that Malte-Brun could be a good geographer for the reason that this scholar had not been on the battlefield of Eylau.

I have made you acquainted with the Germans and the Poles; since we have the time, you and I, we are going to take a trip to Spain. Usually, when one crosses a frontier, one is prepared in advance to the changes in customs and language, but these changes are gradual. Here people speak French, while they understand German; a little further they speak German while they jabber French. It is only after having gone ten leagues on the other side of the Rhine that you find yourself in Germany. The same may be said with regard to the frontiers of Italy and Poland; but when you have crossed the Bidassoa, you are in Spain, entirely in Spain. Two minutes before you were in France; when you have crossed the river,



you are a thousand leagues away from it; the customs, the language, the dress, all are different. The transition is the same from Saint-Jean-de-Luz to Irun, as it is from Calais to Dover, and yet the Bidassoa is but a brook.

Everything was new to me in this singular country, and I spent my days in visiting the streets, the cafés, the shops, to make my observations.<sup>12</sup> The Spanish language is very easy for a Provençal who knows Latin, and I soon was able to hold my own with any one. But the Spaniards are not talkers; instead of the gaiety, the openness, the frankness and loyalty which characterises our nation, I found only careworn, sombre brows, crafty faces of which our villains of the melodrama are admirable copies. See those groups on the street corners, in the public places; to smoke a cigar and do nothing seem to be, for those who compose them, supreme happiness. In France, when ten persons are assembled, you can not hear yourself, each wishes to speak, each seeks to shine in the conversation; in Spain all is silence. Wrapped in their dirty cloaks covering clothes still more dirty, allowing only a half of their faces



to be seen and the two fingers that hold the cigar, the Spaniards remain entire hours facing one another saying nothing, blowing on one another clouds of smoke. From time to time someone speaks, which he always does as briefly as possible; then the most loquacious of those present replies *puès*. This *puès* is a preposition, a conjunction, an interjection which answers everything. According to the manner in which one pronounces it, according to the affirmative, dubitative or negative sign which accompanies it, it means yes, no, according, but, however, you are right, I do not believe it, etc., etc.

There is still to be found in the Spanish language a word as frequently used: it is *carajo*. Should these two words be suppressed from Spanish conversations, only the smoke of the cigars would be left. Instead of saying *carajo*, the women make use of a diminutive: *carai* is to *carajo* what our French *je m'en fiche* is to a certain expression which the Academy has not yet sanctioned.

What a difference from our lodging of Germany, and specially with the good faces of our hosts! To the most careful cleanliness, to the

good nature of the inhabitants beyond the Rhine, succeeded the filth, the scowling faces of the Spaniards. Moreover, although accustomed to the climate of Poland, we were cold in Spain. In Biscay, in Castile, it is impossible to keep warm in winter; people there do not suspect that doors and windows are made to be closed. They know nothing of floors, carpets, the trade of chimney-sweep is unknown, for there are no chimneys. In the kitchens one sees a hole through which the smoke escapes, when it is willing to escape. In the great cities like Burgos and Valladolid, one can count one or two chimneys in the houses of the great lords, and the majority of these have been built by French generals who wished to be lodged comfortably. General Dorsenne had a chimney built in every one of his lodgings.

To get warm, people make use of a *brasero*, a metal vase full of coals lit in the street in the morning. It is placed in the principal room where all the members of the household assemble; there, forming a circle, they toast their knees, which, however, establishes a just compensation with their backs which are always freezing. Men and

women pass around the *cigarito* which each smokes alternatively, and the conversation is as lively as in the street. The prettiest woman shows no repugnance in taking the cigar which comes from a monk's mouth; as for me, I smoked alone, for my own account, as in Poland, I drank from a glass belonging to me exclusively.

When we lodged at inns, as it was militarily, we were not charged for the noise we made, the bill would have been too large for the smallness of our purses; for we avenged ourselves by singing at the top of our voices, for the privations imposed on us by Castilian prodigality. This vengeance reached its destination. Of all the peoples in the world, the Spanish is certainly the one who eats and drinks the least; with what is consumed by one hundred Paris *bourgeois*, one thousand Spaniards could be fed.

The *olla oulle*, a soup, in itself alone composes the three courses of the Spanish meals; I am mistaken, the *cigarito* always comes in to act as a not very substantial dessert. Put in a kettle full of water, some chick-peas, some cabbage, a goodly number of green peppers, a small piece of bacon

or meat, cook the whole to a turn, and you dine as all Spain dines, when it dines well.

In the villages, enter anywhere at the meal hour, you will always see the same course, without any variation. The people who live alone eat bread and raw onions, they do not go to the trouble of making *olla* because fire would be needed. The most essential things are at the lowest prices, and the result is that in this country, a household which possesses six hundred francs income lives in relative opulence, envied by the entire neighbourhood.

Since the beginning of the war, a swarm of French *restaurateurs* had pounced on Spain. They were located from halting-place to halting-place, from Irun as far as Seville inclusively. In their establishments were to be found the best productions of French soil; their active relations with the best *restaurateurs* of Paris, supplied to the moneyed gastronomist a salutary resource as a change from the *olla* of the Spaniards.

These dealers in beefsteak and chops charged very dear for what came out of their kitchens; they were approachable only by those who in an

army are in the habit of trebling their pay by what they call *le tour du bâton* (pickings).

The day after my arrival at Vittoria, I entered a shoemaker's shop to have my shoes mended. There was no one in the place; the master of the establishment was on the opposite side of the street smoking his *cigarito*. His shoulders covered by a mantle with many holes, he looked like a beggar, but like a Spanish beggar wrapped in his misery, of which he seemed more proud than ashamed. He comes near me, I explain my business. "Wait," he says; and immediately calls his wife. "How much is there still in the purse?"

"Twelve *piécettes*" (14 Fr. 40).

"Then I don't work."

"But," said I, "twelve *piécettes* will not last for ever."

"*Quién has visto magnana?*" (Who has seen to-morrow?) he replied, turning his back on me.

I went to one of his colleagues who, probably not being the master of so important a sum, was good enough to work for me.

The pride of the Spaniards has become proverbial; in that country, the lowest of beggars con-

siders himself as noble as the King. Dressed in rags, he drapes himself like a Roman senator; you must be particular as to how you refuse him alms; and it is a ceremony which one has to repeat often, because of the innumerable quantity of beggars with which Spain is filled; it is the country of Guzman d' Alfranche; this hero of beggary could have been born nowhere else.

Begging is a trade; every church door, every street corner decorated with an image of the Virgin or a saint has its particular beggar. It is a business which one exploits and sells. A ruined man, who knows not what else to do, buys a second hand saint, he christens it with the name of Saint James or Saint Pancrace, stands it near a mile-stone and becomes *santero*. The peasants give him alms, he prays for the dead in consideration of a salary, he recites in your presence the seven psalms of penitence, which he applies to the person you mention: this costs those interested two *sous*. But if you wish to buy psalms said at his home, in his leisure moments, these cost less; he will sell you as many as you please at fifty per cent. less than the regular price. In such a

contract as the seller delivers nothing, it is to be feared that he may sell to others what you have just purchased; then things are bound to be somewhat mixed. The devout woman who spends a *réal* in this manner believes she is redeeming her former sins, just as the courtesan considers herself unseen because she has drawn the curtain in front of the image of the Virgin which always ornaments her *boudoir*.

If the Spanish men are morose and not given to talking, the women are lively, sparkling, fond of babbling and they do it quite well. In general they have but little education, but the natural wit and the charm which they display in saying nothings prevent one from noticing it at first. They have a thorough knowledge of the vocabulary of gallantry; all phrases of love and of sentiment are familiar to them; they have an immense repertory of these. When the occasion offers, all that gushes forth as from a spring; they seem to have acquired them by heart. As soon as I perceived their taste, I composed some very high-sounding tirades; I began to use them in writing and in speech, and things went along as smoothly as could be.



The Spanish women possess a great charm: it is that they do not make you languish too long. The main thing is to be to their liking; when you are beloved, the preliminaries are soon gone through, and they are soon yours. I have read, I know not where, that a lover said to his mistress: "But what shall we do? Your mother does not leave you alone an instant." "Try to please me enough," she replied, "and do not worry about the rest." Spanish women all seem to say to you: "Be attentive to me, please me, if you can; do not think of my husband, do not bother about the others who may be watching; in spite of them all, the favorable moment will come; the sooner the better."



THE FENCING-MASTERS AND THE  
DUELISTS



## CHAPTER VI

### THE FENCING-MASTERS AND THE DUELISTS

In all regiments, there is a man whom the soldiers respect at least as much as their colonel, and this man is the fencing-master. He has several lieutenants who, under the name of assistants, exercise a part of that moral authority which the great master delegates to them. On my arrival in the regiment, I requested M. Malta . . . to give me lessons in his art which I knew very imperfectly, and he taught me by rule how one should go about it to kill his man without ever being killed. For, as M. Jourdain's master has so well put it: "The whole secret of fencing consists of two things: in giving and not receiving. Now, so as not to receive, turn the sword of your adversary from the line of your body, which only depends on a little motion of the wrist, either inward, or outward."

M. Malta . . . who, I believe, had never

read the "*Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," made use of exactly the same language, which might prove, were it necessary, that Molière was well acquainted with the human heart. He was a good eccentric; I am speaking of M. Malta . . . the things of which he boasted most, and which he regarded as claims to glory, were precisely those that a man of honour would have been ashamed to confess. He had sought a quarrel with all the most famous of his time, and he had killed them by the dozen. . . . I believe that he exaggerated the number of the dead somewhat; however, if one spoke in his presence of some celebrated fighter, I can affirm that his greatest desire was to measure himself with him. I was tractable at his lessons and he appeared very well pleased with my progress. "Lieutenant," said he to me one day, "if you continue this way, in two months I shall teach you politeness." By this he meant that he would teach me the salute and all the pretences of courtesy that ordinarily precede a fencing match.

When we had reached the point where I could learn politeness, M. Malta . . . always urged me to make big eyes while saluting: "Lieutenant,

open your eyes, . . . more . . . still more. . . . When you salute, you must open your eyes like the crystals of a watch; you must show that you're present." When we wished to arouse his anger, we praised before him the fencing-masters of the other regiments; then M. Malta . . . would shrug his shoulders as a sign of contempt, and always ended by saying: "Not one of those people would be worthy of sweeping my fencing-hall."

Among his assistants, Dupré, a drummer, held a very distinguished place; he was his coadjutor, his successor, the heir-apparent of that great office. In the taverns, Dupré made the firstcomer buy him a drink, or else he invited the reluctant individual to follow him on the field *to refresh themselves with sword blows*; it was his favorite expression. Never did more insolent and blustering personage wear the shako on his ear.

"You see that cuirassier drinking alone," said Dupré one day to his comrade l'Etoile, "wait a bit, I am going to *demolish* him."

"Be careful! should he fall on you, you would be crushed."

"My sword will compel him to fall on his back."

And Dupré, approaching, seizes the glass of the man with the jacket of steel and drinks down its contents without stopping to breathe. It is but right to tell you that a fighting footsoldier always prefers to pick a quarrel with a horseman; the horseman is his natural enemy. Among the men on horseback, he will choose the cuirassier, especially if the latter is very tall and stout; if he kills him, the act deserves greater praise.

"Comrade, you are making a mistake."

"Rather it is you who do not see clearly."

"You take me for someone else."

"Not at all, my dear, it is done on purpose."

"Then you are trying to pick a quarrel with me?"

"Of course; look, he is beginning to notice it."

"If I put you in my boot, it will serve you as a guard-room."

"Yes, but you have to put me in it first, and you will be dead before that happens."

"*Mille tonnerres!*"

"No noise, my friend, softly, let us not shout;

between Frenchmen there is a way of settling matters; come this way to show me your boot."

"And my sword at the same time."

Five minutes after, the cuirassier was dead.

However, one fine day Dupré found his master: the sword of a young recruit ran him through. The news was brought to us; everybody was delighted to hear it; everyone said that the blackguard had only what he deserved. Nevertheless the surgeon-major betook himself on the field of battle; he wanted to withdraw the steel from the wound to apply a dressing; the thing was at first considered impossible, because the weight of the body in falling, had bent the point of the sword. It was necessary to call the armorer who straightened it. The operation was a long one; the wretched fellow must have suffered horribly; nothing, however, appeared on his face; on the contrary, while jesting with those present, he urged the surgeon to do his duty well. The sword was withdrawn, the wound bandaged; Dupré remained two months in the hospital and then . . . he came out more of a blackguard than ever. One hundred thousand good people would have died of such

a wound. Dupré did not. Besides, it is remarkable that all these fighters were ordinarily very bad soldiers; the man who, counting on his strength, seeks to pick a quarrel with the weak, is necessarily a coward. On the days of battles, these blusterers always had a new pretext for remaining behind; they were to be seen only the following day.

A recruit in their place would have received *la savate*,<sup>13</sup> but the *reason* they offered and always at the point of the sword closed the mouth of the whole company.

The drummer is in general a duelist, a fencing-master or at least an assistant master. The drummer is quarrelsome, hard to get along with, a banterer, always ready to draw his sword; he is the Paris *gamin* in uniform. Carrying no gun, having a sword as a sole weapon; he caresses it, polishes it, handles it as long as the day lasts, and when the occasion comes to draw, the blade does not stick in the scabbard. Not only is he clever in handling the broadsword, but he also knows how to handle the small sword. When he travels, look at the top of his knapsack: two



capped foils, rolled up in his cape, present to the *amateur* their sharpened points adorned with two corks to prevent rusting.

As long as he is in the garrison, the drummer-assistant carries an orderly's short saber, he has to; should he lose it, he would be compelled to buy another at the regiment store. But as soon as a campaign is begun, he throws far away from him that vulgar blade to put in its place an awl which he is very careful to mount *en quarte*. It is by this token that one recognises all the *fiends* of a regiment; they all have the handle of the orderly's sword, but a blade as long as an ell at every step strikes their right heel. Indeed, it is not comfortable in marching, but one must suffer some inconvenience if one wishes to affect a ferocious air. They make themselves feared, or at least they think so, and that's a great pleasure for these gentlemen.

I have seen fencing-masters fight together seriously, without motive, without hatred, without a reason capable of causing a duel. They fought to try their strength; one of them was killed; the other strutted about adding one more triumph

to his past exploits. I have seen two of these who in a match, quarreling over a denied pass, of common accord left their foils for their swords, and fought in the presence of fifty spectators who allowed them to do it. "You will not deny that one!" said the victor as he ran his adversary through. It would be truly difficult to deny a sword thrust which pierced your chest. A fencing-master had placed over his door this singular sign: "Fighting here from ten to four." It was very convenient for the *amateurs*: they were always sure to find a champion ready to face them.

One day I was crossing the bridge of Stettin; I was on my way to the faubourg Lastadie; there I met an assistant, he was a sapper, a drunken, quarrelsome fellow; he combined all these qualities in one person; to-day such a person is called a pluralist. Our man had been drinking as usual, he was speaking to himself, zigzagging, and, to use a soldiers' expression, he was on bad terms with equilibrium and was making scallops.

"How!" he was saying while pulling out the hair of his long beard, "shall I not find out of the whole garrison a good fellow to face me? not

one who will permit me to cut a button-hole in the middle of his stomach? Formerly I should have found a hundred ready to take sword in hand; to-day not one; you are all soldiers of the pope. If I were the Emperor, I would put you before a cannon and set it off to teach you manners."

"Well! what's the matter, friend?" asked one of his comrades whom he met fishing at the end of the bridge.

"What's the matter? you ask me what's the matter? Well, I'll tell you what's the matter. It is that for the past two hours I have been looking for some good fellow willing to be freshened up by a few sword thrusts, and I have found none; I provoke them all and not one gets angry."

"If you wish it, I am ready to do you that service."

"Good, that's what I call speaking! I had always said that one could count on you. Let me embrace you. You are a Frenchman, you are a friend; that's the kind of a comrade to have."

"Wait, let me take in my line, and I'm with you."

"Ah! the good fellow! he is a grenadier! We

shall go yonder in that small wood, near the road to Dam; we shall be alone; no one will disturb us; it will be very comfortable, we shall fight as we please. Your sword is sharp, is it not?"

"Don't worry!"

"Good, mine cuts better than the razors of the company's barber."

"That's the way it should be. Let's be off."

I thought it was a joke and that the fisherman, being in full possession of his senses, had only agreed with the drunkard so as to take him home. Nothing of the sort; in the evening I heard that the combat had taken place seriously, and that my jolly dogs, both wounded in the face, had returned to the barracks, arm in arm, each one proclaiming the other his best friend.

I know that the public will not believe me; if they had the occasion to study the ways of garrisons and of guard-houses, they would see things more startling than this. But let us go farther up in military hierarchy; I am going to tell you about a scene of which I was a witness in Paris. An officer of my company has a quarrel one evening on the boulevard with a captain who lived at

Courbevoie. The discussion becomes heated and they make an appointment for the next day at the Bois de Boulogne. It was almost midnight, the captain was going to leave us, when we called his attention to a storm which was about to break. He replies that at this hour he would not be admitted in a rooming-house: "I am going to hire a cabriolet," he adds; "besides, I am not afraid of the storm." Then his adversary approaches and says to him:

"Stay here, you will sleep with me, I offer you a half of my bed. We shall leave together for the Bois de Boulogne, it will be much more convenient, neither one will have to wait for the other."

"I accept. But we shall fight."

"Would I otherwise have offered you half of my bed?"

Our two men went to bed together, talked of politics, manœuvres, love affairs, and the next morning, after having eaten some cold chicken and drunk a bottle of champagne, they merrily went to try and cut each other's throats. One of them was gravely wounded, but did not die.

I have known many officers who were a prey

to *duellomania*; they thought themselves obliged to have an affair of honour every month.

We also had generals who had the same tastes; to kill a man in a duel was a pastime with them. They did not digest the less well on that account, and they only slept the better; it was with them as it is with us when we kill a few partridges. A general whom I do not wish to name was fighting a pistol duel with a young lawyer. "You are the offended party, monsieur, fire first, it is your right, but try to aim straight, for if you miss me, you are a dead man." The young man fired. "Imbecile! your bullet is in the trees, and mine is going to hit the third button of your coat, it will go through your heart, you will not suffer." As the cat which prolongs the agony of a mouse held in its paws, the general took a long and careful aim. "Yes," he said, "it is too bad to die at thirty, with fine prospects, fame at the bar, a mistress. . . . I understand your regrets . . . you should not have crossed my path. Come, say good-bye." A shot was heard: the young man was dead.

At Ragusa, thirty officers were assembled at a

general's; while lunching, duels were discussed, pistol shooting; each cited some remarkable feat. One killed sparrows on the fly, another split bullets on the blade of a knife. The general sees a grenadier passing in the street and calls him in. On entering, the soldier puts in his pocket a short pipe which a moment before he held in his mouth. "Keep your pipe," says the general; "continue to smoke, stand in the position of a soldier without weapons, still, head high, attention! Turn to the right! Don't move!" At this moment the general takes a pistol, fires and breaks the pipe in the smoker's mouth.

"Here is a *louis* with which to drink. Gentlemen, this is what I call shooting with a pistol."

"Thank you, general," said the astounded grenadier; "another time, I shall not smoke when coming to your house."

M. Héméré, the man of the mill, he who consulted Laborie's map with so much success, was a consummate fighter. Of a very small size, of a teasing disposition, he thought that people were always making game of him; the least gesture was misunderstood; always asking for an explanation,



he obtained it sometimes; but, very often, these quarrels without motive, thanks to the intervention of the witnesses, ended on the field by an explanation and without recourse to the sword.

To finish with M. Héméré, I shall say that owing to his continual teasing and getting angry at trifles, he found someone who meant business. The poor devil died in a duel, on the eve of the battle of Wagram.

During the forty days which preceded that great day, the entire army was working at the fortifications of the island of Lobau. Our soldiers were paid at the rate of fifty centimes a day. A young officer of engineers, in charge of the inspection of the works, seeing that the grenadiers rested too long, reproached them for it. The latter immediately went to complain to their captain of the manner in which *M. Problem* had treated them. It is thus that they designate the officers of engineers of whom they think very little.

The captain, furious that someone else should dare to lecture his grenadiers, curls up his moustache and hastens to the officer to ask an explanation of his language. He was one of those brave fel-



lows who speak only of killing and cutting in two, one of those men, in short, who, to use the expression of Molière, are *all sword thrusts* and whom our soldiers call *dealers in sudden deaths*.

“Monsieur, you have dared to say that my grenadiers . . .”

“Do not work. Yes, monsieur, and that’s the truth.”

“I shall teach you, my little greenhorn, to hold your tongue.”

“Greenhorn! Greenhorn!”

“Yes, greenhorn, recruit, and I shall prove it to you presently.”

“I say, captain! Do you imagine that you frighten me with your great moustachios? You no doubt think yourself very terrible because you haven’t shaved for two weeks? But learn, monsieur, that if I wished, I myself could go without shaving.”

“Ah! you pretend to make fun of me! We shall see if you will be in a humour to jest when I shall have run you through.”

“Softly, monsieur! If we should come to that, I hope to be there.”

"No explanation: on guard!"

"On guard, I am willing; but I wish to say something: I am cool, you are angry, the match would be unequal; let us wait until to-morrow."

"To-morrow? to-morrow, you will have been dead twenty-four hours, I shall already have eaten your liver, I shall have digested your conscience. On guard! I want my grenadiers to bury you under your fortifications, then they'll work with a will."

"You wish it, monsieur, I am ready."

The young pupil of the Polytechnic School and the moustachiod captain draw their swords and the fight begins in the midst of the laborers who are delighted to leave the shovel and pick for an instant and see the vexatious overseer punished.

At the captain's first lunge, the officer of engineers warded the blow; his sword falling on the hand of his adversary, touched the little finger which was almost cut off.

"You are wounded, monsieur," he said to him; "we shall stop right here, if it suits you."

"Ah! scoundrel! do you not know that *coups de manchette* <sup>14</sup> are not allowed?"

"Monsieur, I am ignorant of everything, it is the first time I fight; I strike wherever I can, do the same."

"Ah! d—— recruit, I am going to give you a lesson which you'll remember!"

"Monsieur, you are wounded; I have too much advantage over you, let us postpone this affair."

"On guard, scoundrel, on guard!"

"Here I am!"

After a few thrusts and parries, the captain received a wound which, beginning at the top of the thigh, stopped only at the knee. He was compelled to cease the combat, but nothing can be compared to the anger he felt at having been wounded twice by a young man without a moustache! a greenhorn! a recruit!

"I shall have my revenge," he said to him; "I'll fix you later; I'll look for you; were you at the devil's, and we shall see . . . recruit, if *coups de manchette* will still be in your favour."

They carried away the captain, who was ill a

long time: finally he recovered; but during the moments of fever which he suffered, he was continually heard repeating: "A recruit, a d—— greenhorn! a dirty *coup de manchette!!*"

At Dantzig a captain had just received from the quartermaster the arrears of his pay, in the neighbourhood of 1,500 francs. He was on his way home, but recalling that he was on guard duty, and that it was time to report at the barracks, he gives the bag of *écus* to his lieutenant: "Since you are going home," said he to him, "and we are neighbours, be kind enough to give this money to my wife."

The lieutenant immediately goes to the lady's home, and on entering lays on the table the bag of money. He talks, makes himself agreeable, and from one thing to another, he makes a declaration of love. Spurned at first, he does not lose courage, he plays the lover well, the passionate man; he becomes excited, he throws himself at the feet of his captain's wife. No sacrifice will be too great to make her listen to his plea. He would give his life for a quarter of an hour's happiness. "I have just received a year's pay,

and if you wish these 1,500 francs, they are yours."

Many women would have considered the proposition very impertinent: this one judged it differently; her husband gave her for the purchase of her dresses only what was absolutely necessary, and although very pretty, she always found herself thrown into the shade at all receptions. The demon of coquetry caused her to see in that 1,500 francs dresses, hats, lace collars and flounces, trifles which women love above all things. In turn she might now shine; with a few falsehoods and cunning her husband would suspect nothing. The lieutenant took advantage of this moment of hesitation, he became pressing and the lady surrendered.

The next day, the captain, on coming off guard, meets the young officer, they have a dispute over service matters, harsh words are spoken, and each returns home.

On reaching his house, the captain was in an angry mood.

"What's the matter, my dear?"

"That rascal, he'll hear from me!"

"Who?"

"My lieutenant; I have just put him under arrest for two weeks."

"What for?"

"You will know it later. Where are the 1,500 francs?"

"What?" says the wife, thunderstruck.

"Didn't he give you 1,500 francs?" he asked, shouting like a madman.

"What do you mean?"

"Not another word! Did he give them to you, yes or no?"

"There they are!" said the wife falling at the knees of her husband. "Mercy, forgive me! he took advantage of a moment of weakness . . ."

"What's that you say?"

"That he is a wretch to have told you."

If the captain was angry on entering, imagine the fit which followed when he had discovered this strange secret in this equally strange manner. There was an explanation, the woman confessed everything so as to obtain her pardon, having already admitted too much to permit of her retracting. These 1,500 francs asked for by her husband

had led her to believe that the lieutenant was a babbler.

"He will die by my hand only," she said.

"Leave him to me, I am going to punish him, and after that we shall settle our score."

The offended husband rushed to his rival's quarters; they go on the field, swords are drawn; two minutes later the captain was dead.





## A BATTLE DAY





Austerlitz.



## CHAPTER VII

### A BATTLE DAY

People, after having read history, generally think that a battle is like a review at the Champ de Mars, and that one hundred thousand men placed opposite one hundred thousand men amuse themselves in shooting down each other at their ease to the accompaniment of cannon to produce the effect of the double-bass in an orchestra. I am going to explain to them how a battle is fought.

Our army is on the march preceded by its advance guard, composed of light troops. The hussars go like very devils; they trot, they gallop, the enemy flees before them; but soon they stop, our hussars stop also. A village defended by a few hundred men is in front of us, it is ordered attacked by sharpshooters. At the moment that our men enter the gardens, a battalion of the enemy appears which makes them lose ground. We send a regiment to support them, the others

send two; we order forward ten, the enemy shows us twenty; each side makes the artillery advance, the cannon growl, soon everyone takes part in the merry-making, fighting goes on, they slaughter one another; one cries for his leg, another for his nose, others cry for nothing, and there is food for the crows and for the makers of official reports.

The science of a general-in-chief amounts to this: to have on a set day, at a given point, as many men as possible. Napoleon said it, and Napoleon was a judge. A general must know which point of the map will be most seriously disputed. It is there that the battle will be fought, it is consequently there that he must bring all his troops by twenty different roads. An order badly given, badly understood, often causes the failure of the finest strategic combinations, to-wit: Grouchy's corps which did not reach Waterloo. The First Consul, before leaving Paris, had marked with a pin on the map the plain of Marengo for the scene of a new triumph; the result justified his prevision.

The science of a general consists also in knowing the strength of the enemy at such a point, his weakness at such another. To succeed in this, the serv-

ice of spies is indispensable. Good ones must be had and they must be well paid. Napoleon gave gold by the handfuls, it was a good investment. We have had generals put to rout because they haggled on the subject of secret funds.

When one approaches a battlefield where the fighting is on, nothing is so discouraging for the young soldiers as the remarks of the wounded who are going back.

"Do not go so fast, do not hurry," they say, "to be killed, it is not necessary to run so quickly."

"The enemy is ten times more numerous than we."

"They've cut off my leg, they'll cut off something else of yours."

"You look like living corpses."

"Hello, look at that one, does he not seem dead?"

"He is; yesterday he forgot to get buried; he remembers it to-day, etc."

In vain are they told to be silent; an arm in a sling, a gash across the face guarantee impunity, give the right of insolence, and the jeremiads continue so long as they find someone to listen to them.

One of these poor devils was passing before us with his head split open and his arm broken. Everyone was moved to pity at sight of him.

"How sad!" the men said: "two wounds! what a long road to go to be bandaged!"

"You are all fools," exclaimed the wounded man: "you'll have more than that presently: I know my fate, but you do not know yours."

You should have seen the faces of the recruits on hearing these remarks, and specially on seeing the first bodies they came across. They went twenty feet out of their way for fear of touching them, soon they came nearer, later they marched over them without ceremony.

Man becomes accustomed to everything, to pleasure and to pain. How often have you experienced that a great grief, a great joy, after two weeks becomes dull sensation, a very ordinary thing? Remember this at your next sorrow, and say: "This will pass as other sorrows have passed."

To prove the truth of my reasoning, I am going to tell you a little story. You know that after the siege of Toulon, the Republic caused all those who at that time were opposed to it to be shot down.



After the guns had thrown down entire lines, a voice called out: "Let all those who are not dead rise! The Republic pardons them!" A few wretched wounded, others whom the grape-shot had spared, deluded by this promise, raised their heads: at that moment, a squadron of butchers (history says a squadron of dragoons; history must be mistaken) rushes on them, sword in hand, completing what the guns had commenced; soon the sun set over this atrocious slaughter.

On a beautiful night, one of these wretches awakes in the middle of this ocean of bodies; he is wounded in ten places, in the head, in the legs, in the arms, in the chest, everywhere. He rolls over, he drags himself along.

"Who goes there?" cries the sentry.

"Finish me."

"Who are you?"

"One of those wretches who has been fired on; finish me."

"I am a soldier, I am not an executioner."

"Finish me, you will do me a service; you will perform an act of humanity."

"I am not an executioner, I tell you."

“Finish me, I beg of you, all my members are broken, my head is split open, it is impossible for me to recover; you will spare me horrible suffering, finish me.”

The sentry drew near, verified the condition of the wounded man; believing in the impossibility of a cure, compassion determined him; had he fired his gun, the post would have taken up arms, he thought it best to use his bayonet, which he thrust into the body of the wretched man. Would you believe it? this man did not die; the next day, while burying all these corpses, a grave-digger saw that he was still alive; he carried him to his home, nursed him, and life returned. All the wounds were cured. That man was M. de Launoy, a naval officer under Louis XVI; he might well have spared himself that last bayonet thrust.

The surgeon establishes his ambulance at a little distance from the battlefield: it is towards there that the wounded are going; after the first aid, they go to the rear of the army, and they enter the hospitals, until they are able to begin again. It is a curious sight, that of an ambulance, all these surgeons cutting and paring off, the cries of the

wounded, these severed members which fill the yard, the wagons taking away those who are bandaged, stretchers bringing newcomers; it is a mournful company of human miseries. At the battle of Wagram, a grenadier of my regiment is wounded by a bullet; his comrade loads him on his back and carries him to the surgeon-major; but, on the way, another bullet comes and kills the poor wounded man without the bearer noticing it. The latter continues on his way, reaches the ambulance, and lays the grenadier on the operating table.

“What are you bringing there? He is dead, what do you want me to do to him?”

“Major, he is wounded.”

“There, look, imbecile, don't you see he's dead?”

“That's true, see how one is deceived in this world even by his best friend. The sly fellow told me he was only wounded.”

It must not be believed that in the army everyone is brave; I have seen some who could never become accustomed to the sound of the cannon. At Wagram, a soldier of my company had a vio-

lent attack of epilepsy which was ended by the whizzing of the first shot.

An officer of my regiment, with thirty years of service, had never been on the fighting line; the sight of a sword made him pale, and he confessed it frankly. "I should very much like to go on the battlefield, but it is not possible, I should fall back at the first gunshot, and it would be a very bad example." He was usually left behind at the garrison where, however, he made himself very useful by drilling the recruits.

If everyone was not brave in the army, there were some to be found whose courage was not to be compared to anything; and this in all ranks, in all degrees, from King Murat to the common fusileer, from General Dorsenne to the drummer. I could write ten volumes simply on the truly fabulous acts of bravery of our warriors. I shall mention but one which the entire third army corps witnessed in Spain.

General Suchet had just taken Mount Olivo in spite of the predictions of the Spaniards. "The trenches of Mount Olivo," they said, "will bury all the troops of Suchet, and the trenches of Tar-

ragone all the troops of Bonaparte." He meets a wounded soldier whom his comrades were carrying to the ambulance: "Victory, victory, Mount Olivo is taken!"

"Are you gravely wounded?"

"No, general, but unfortunately wounded seriously enough to be obliged to leave the ranks."

"Well answered, friend. What do you wish as a reward for your services?"

"To be allowed to lead the attack when you take Tarragone."

"Better and better."

"You promise me this?"

"Yes."

On the 30th of June, 1811, that is to say one month after, the general-in-chief was about to storm the place. The troops were forming their columns of attack when a footsoldier in dress uniform, as resplendent as on a parade day, approached Suchet.

"I came to remind you of your promise: I wish to lead the attack."

"Ah! it's you, my brave fellow, very good; but soldiers of your kind are too rare that I should be

wasteful of their blood. Remain in your company; by imparting your noble courage to all, you will render greater service than by having yourself killed alone."

"I wish to lead the attack."

"You shall infallibly be killed, I can not allow it."

"General, I have your word, and I wish to be the first to attack."

"So much the worse, my brave fellow, so much the worse for us, do as you please."

The columns start and my footsoldier passes them by twenty paces; he rushes forward in the midst of the grape shot, he is the first to climb the breach, and there, falls riddled with bullets. Picked up by order of Suchet, this brave soldier was carried to the hospital: a breath of life permitted him to see on that same day the entire corps of officers, with the general at their head, who came to visit him. Suchet took off his cross to decorate the breast of the footsoldier who died admired by the whole army.

That hero's name was Bianchelli. Chateaubriand has said: "Glory must be something very

real, since it causes the heart of the one who is only its witness to beat."

I am going to cite an act of courage of another kind.

During the civil wars in Vendée, a republican soldier was taken prisoner of war, and condemned to death together with all his comrades. They were taken to the field to be shot, when one of the Vendean chiefs, admiring the fine bearing of the grenadier, asked his pardon from the general-in-chief.

"No pardon," he replied, "they had none for our men in the Republican army."

"Never mind, you will be generous, you will save a hero; he is a Frenchman, he will be one more support for our cause, and for you a devoted friend who will owe his life to you."

"At this price, I consent, if he is willing to march with us and shout: '*Vive le roi!*'"

"Leave it to me. Grenadier, come here, I have asked your pardon from the general, he has granted it if you shout: '*Vive le roi!*'"

"*Vive la République!*" replied the soldier.

"Let him be shot!"

The grenadier returns proudly back to his comrades, several were already dead. He stands with his arms folded across his breast, his head high, facing the muskets, when the Vendean chief throws himself at the general's feet.

"I have always served with honour, you know it; as a reward for the blood I have shed, I ask for the pardon of the grenadier without conditions; do you refuse it?"

"So be it, I grant it."

"Come forward, grenadier, the general grants you your life, and I trust that you will not make use of it against us."

"Is it unconditionally?"

"Unconditionally."

"Well then, *vive le roi!*"

The name of this hero is not known, I knew it once. . . . I am ashamed to confess it . . . I have forgotten it. Had he lived in ancient Greece or Rome, the sculptors would not have failed to make him immortal.

"I defy anyone to frighten me!" said a long-sworded hero, with the tufted moustaches of the King of clubs. "That's what we'll see!" replied



some friends. A wager is made, a large sum is deposited; the winner is to get it. A date is set after which, if the hero has not said: "I am afraid," he will have won the wager.

The bettors take every precaution. By means of secret intelligence, they render themselves masters of the doors, enter the room in which their man sleeps; they take the bullets out of his pistols and saw into four quarters the blade of his sword.

On a beautiful night, they all enter his room. He awakens with a start, and sees a dozen strolling corpses covered with shrouds, they carry a bier and chant unintelligible words. They set down the coffin, surround it with wax-tapers, making signs to the hero to come and take his place in it. The latter loudly bursts into laughter, and the chanting continues.

After a half hour thus passed without any sort of variation, the bettor, magnetised by the monotonous chant, the burning candles, the open bier, was beginning to feel uncomfortable.

"Gentlemen," said he, "this is quite enough, I think; I wish to sleep, withdraw."

The chanting still continues.

"This is beginning to annoy me, and if you do not go at once, I shall take other means."

The chanting still continues.

Our man draws his sword, attempts to strike one of the phantoms with it; it breaks.

The chanting still continues.

Furious, he takes his pistols, threatens to fire; no answer is given, only the chant, he fires and two of the phantoms hand him back his bullets while chanting.

"Gentlemen," he says, "it's all over, I am afraid! I have lost my wager, speak to me, hurry, it is time!"

The chanting still continues.

The hero falls at full length: he was dead.

I shall not play the blusterer here, the *capitan Matamore*, by saying that I have never been afraid, a thing that I have heard others say time and again. I declare, on the contrary, that the first time that a cannon ball whizzed over my head, I bowed to it by an involuntary movement; with the second I was less polite; I stood firm at the third; but every time I reached the firing line, I confess



MURAT.



that the same form of politeness was always precisely followed.

When one manœuvres, when one is firing, when one is actively fighting, these feelings disappear, the smoke, the roar of the cannon, the shouts of the combatants intoxicate everybody, one has no time to think of self. But when one has to remain still in his line without firing, and receive a hail of cannon balls, it is not at all comfortable.

There are some men, however, who, endowed with extraordinary strength of spirit, see the greatest danger with calmness. Murat, the bravest of the brave, always charged at the head of his cavalry, and never returned without having his sword dyed with blood. That is easily understood; but a thing which I have seen done by General Dorsenne,<sup>15</sup> and which I have seen done by him only, was to stand still, with his back on the enemy, facing his shot riddled regiment, and saying: "Close ranks!" without looking behind him a single time. On other occasions, I have tried to imitate him, tried to turn my back; I was unable to remain in that position, curiosity always com-

pelled me to look at the place from which the shots came.

An entire army can not march on the same road, with its artillery and its wagons; the head would have reached Strasburg while the tail would still be on the Place du Carrousel; and then that army must be fed; all together, it could not find food, the more so as the big fellows who compose it usually have an astounding appetite. When one sees the separate divisions approach, when the detached generals make a junction with the principal corps, it is easy to predict a battle. Of all those that have been fought in our time, the battle of Wagram was the longest expected; the field was known, each had studied it. On both sides, for forty days, all the dispositions of attack and defence were studied at leisure.

In the evening after the victory, we were weak with hunger and specially with thirst; soldiers enter a house, and find there some Austrians drinking, half tipsy, and making no hostile demonstration. They drink with them and everything is as pleasant as can be. Two officers of my regiment appear:

“What are you doing here?” they say to the French soldiers; “why are these Austrians not prisoners? Break their weapons and take these men to general headquarters.”

“Hello! . . . what’s the matter with *monsieur l’officier*? He wants us to throw these good friends in prison, these kind people who have given us to drink, these excellent Austrians who wish us no harm!”

“I order it.”

“Listen; if you don’t get out of here at once, we’ll show you what we think of your orders.”

And immediately my drunken fellows aim at their officers and fire. It was necessary to send a company of grenadiers to bring them to reason; several were killed and wounded in the fray.

The whole French army was intoxicated on the night of the battle of Wagram; it slept in the vineyards, and, in Austria, the wine-cellars are located in the middle of the field where the vine is grown. It was good, very abundant, the soldiers drank beyond measure, and if ten thousand Austrians, knowing that we were *somno vinoque sepulti*, had attacked us during the night, we should



have been totally routed. It would have been wholly impossible to make one-tenth of the soldiers take up arms. On what does the destiny of empires depend! All might have been changed that day; the fifth act of the great drama which had been playing for so long a time in Europe might have had a cellar for an ending. Men of genius, make your calculations then; it needs but very little to make them fail. It is probable that the Austrians were in a similar condition, because if we had drunk to celebrate our victory, they had no doubt done the same to forget their defeat. During a campaign, the great difficulty consists in knowing the state in which the enemy is: the general who could know this would always be victorious.

The battle of Wagram had no great material result: that is to say that there were no great hauls as there were at Ulm, at Jena and Ratisbon; there were hardly any prisoners; we took nine pieces of cannon from the Austrians, and we lost fourteen. When this was reported to the Emperor, he replied with great calmness: "Nine from fourteen leaves five."



Ordinarily, after a battle, an order of the day informed us of what we had done; for, like M. Jourdain, we made history without knowing it. In his proclamations to the army which Napoleon himself wrote, and the style of which was perfect, he informed us that he was pleased with us, that we had surpassed his expectations, that we had rushed on with the rapidity of the eagle, then he gave us the details of how we had conducted ourselves: the number of soldiers, of cannons, of wagons we had taken; it was exaggerated, but it was high-sounding and very effective. After Wagram we did not have the slightest proclamation, not the smallest order of the day; for more than three weeks we were ignorant of the name which that famous day would have in history; among ourselves we called it the battle of the 5th and 6th of July: we only heard of the name of Wagram through the Paris papers.

It is not sufficient that a general have talent, he must besides be lucky; in war circumstances combine in such a fashion that something unforeseen always presents itself. When the services of a new man were proposed to Cardinal Richelieu,

the shrewd old man always asked if the applicant was lucky; and if the answer was in the affirmative, the place was granted. Napoleon believed in his destiny, although he possessed astounding genius; it was modesty. How many occasions are there in his life when chance, the blunders of his enemies, favoured him!

We were in camp, near Ratzeburg, in Holstein; the enemy was at two leagues from us; there was no fighting, or at least but very little, just enough to show from time to time that we were around. Each general knew very well that he was not to decide the question: all depended on what should take place in the Grand Army which was then at Leipsic.

One day, Maréchal Davout decided to order a general reconnoitring to compel the enemy to take up arms, count them and know the number of men we had opposite us. A formidable column started off one fine morning, and two hours after we were opposite the Russian, Prussian and Swedish camp; for it was composed of all these nations. The camp appeared to us to be uninhabited; fearing an ambuscade, we advance with precaution;

scouts are sent forward; they enter all the barracks, and see no one. What has become of the enemy? While awaiting for the reply to the question, the order is given to set fire. The camp burns; in an instant all these straw roofs become piles of ashes.

While we were gazing at this immense bonfire, and each was making his own conjectures as to the disappearance of the enemy, the cannon thunders behind us; the noise increases, and everything leads us to believe that our camp is attacked. "We are cut off," say the soldiers: "the Russians have had knowledge of our movements, they have allowed us to advance; they are taking our camp, and then they will easily get the better of us."

French soldiers are easily demoralised: four hussars behind them worry them more than a thousand in front. "We are cut off," they continued to repeat, "in this case." It took many words to prove to them that if someone was cut off, it could only be the four hussars.

"Captain, I have a prisoner," exclaimed a recruit in a skirmish.

"Well, bring him here!"

"He will not walk."

“ Draw your sword.”

“ He has taken it from me.”

But in the plight in which we were, the soldiers seemed to be telling the truth, their fear appeared well founded. The Russians, informed of our movements, had allowed us to pass; they were taking advantage of our absence to crush our comrades. All hesitation was impossible, we must fly to their aid, it was specially necessary to take certain heights from which three hundred men would suffice to prevent our communicating with our fellow soldiers.

We start off, we arrive almost on the rur at the narrow pass of Gros-Mulsahn and meet no one.

Then we began to see clearly, the enemy must necessarily be unaware of our march, since he had not taken possession of so fine a position. For the same reason that we did not know his movements an hour before, he probably did not know ours. These conjectures turned to certainty, when, having reached our camp, we saw it attacked on all sides.

Chance was the cause that the two generals op-

posing each other had had the same idea on the same day, at the same hour; they had decided to attack one another and had taken a different route.

The Emperor liked to bestow the ranks and decorations. After a battle, he held reviews, distributing ribbons and epaulets; each man hoped for something, but following an affair wherein two or three hundred men were engaged, no matter what the outcome might be, hope was not even permitted to the petty officers or soldiers. The chief was careful to draw up a superb report interspersed with glory, daring, able manœuvres, and if any reward came later, it was always for him.

I am going to give an idea of the manner in which history was then written. During the campaign of 1813, we had an outpost affair at Sprottau, a small city of Saxony; the Russian rear-guard defended itself an instant, there were on all sides three or four companies engaged. In brief, the enemy withdrew, leaving in our hands some prisoners and a few baggage wagons. An hour after, we were strolling on the public square talking of our prowess of the morning.

“There is food for the makers of bulletins,” said an officer. “You will later see that we have done superb, magnificent things!”

“I do not know,” said another, “whether we have done much, but I answer for it that they will not fail to say so.”

“It will be reported that the general has gathered laurels by the armful, but our regiment will not be named.”

“Well, we’ll have a line, and he a page.”

“We’ll have nothing at all.”

“Nothing at all will be said of the affair, it is really not worth while.”

“You’ll see, when the Paris papers come. But the better to judge, let us write down on the spot, so as not to forget them, the brilliant results of the day. Here are the prisoners: let us count them; good! there are sixty-four, plus three baggage-wagons with twelve horses; plus a cannon and a caisson.”

Two weeks after, the papers arrive. Mercy! what wonders we had done! when I say we, I mean General S——. With unbelievable daring, with learned tactics, he had surrounded, attacked,

overthrown, taken, killed. Three hundred dead, a thousand wounded, two thousand prisoners, ten pieces of cannon, sixty baggage wagons, were the glorious results of his strategic science and noble courage. He had done all that alone; our regiment was not even mentioned.

In fact, if the general had said that with such a regiment, he had done such fine things, everyone would have considered it quite natural, and the honour would have been shared; but in writing that "giving way to his natural impetuosity, with a small part of his advance guard, he had overthrown the enemy, who necessarily owed their salvation only to the quickness of their legs," the glory is his alone. This advance guard is an ideal, fantastic being, impossible to personify. It may perhaps be four men, and as the general has done all with so small a number, he must be a formidable fellow. Ah! if I dared, how many similar heroes I might mention!

The *sic vos non vobis* of Virgil daily received its application to the army. For everything, *savoir faire* is necessary to succeed. At the battle of Eylau, a recruit brings to his captain a Russian



flag which he had found in the snow in the midst of twenty bodies.

“Imbecile, you take that for a flag? It is a company guidon of no importance; every day I find such things, and I don’t stoop to pick them up.”

A quarter of an hour after, the captain was addressing the maréchal.

“Here is a flag,” he was saying, “which I’ve taken from the Russians, four men were defending it; they are all dead. . . .” The captain was chief of battalion the next day.

The word *advancement* lodges itself in a military brain at the moment of entering service; it does not come out until the day of retirement. It is about the same as the word *husband* in the mind of a young girl; she thinks of it every day. “We are going to the ball this evening, I shall perhaps find a husband there!” says the maid. “We are starting on a campaign, there may be advancement,” says the soldier. This idea engrosses the whole army, from the drummer to the marshal. When we were dictating laws to Europe, the generals nightly dreamed that deputies from a neigh-



bouring kingdom came to offer them a gold crown on a velvet cushion.

The example of Bernadotte turned all heads. "Such a marshal is going to be promoted King, such a grenadier is to be promoted corporal." This form of expression was very natural; we all thought we had a sceptre in the scabbard of our sword. A soldier had become king, each thought he might become one also.

Much is said to-day of military advancement under the Empire, and specially of the soldiers' gratitude towards the Emperor. The word gratitude is very amusing; is not this a strange misuse of words? Candidly, had we to be so thankful to his Imperial and Royal Majesty when he was gracious enough to give the places of the dead to those who remained? We yearly drew lots as to who should take his neighbour's place. And very often, he who won could not lay his hands on the stake. After each battle, a swarm of officers sent from Paris pounced upon our regiments to take possession of the best vacant places. The new nobility was as greedy as the ancient; all possible nobilities are the same. Had the Empire lasted

ten more years, it would have been considered remarkable if a plebeian had been named colonel. The name of officer of fortune was beginning to return to favour, and we were on the verge of seeing the greatest plebeian ambitions age in the obscure honours of a major's rank. The sons of marshals, generals, counts and barons, councillors of state and prefects, took on a new rank every two weeks; it was by rewarding them in the army for what they had not done that their fathers were encouraged.

Not that Messieurs the marshals and generals were lacking in courage: they have proven the contrary on a thousand occasions; but the profession was beginning to bore. When one possesses a handsome residence in Paris, and a fine château in the suburbs, it is not agreeable to waste one's life in the smoke of a bivouac. Ten years, twenty years, that's long enough, but for ever!

Who was named at each battle? ten people out of three hundred thousand, and yet every one did his duty, but every one could not be named.

I daily hear people repeating that one went to

the army to serve the country, to serve the Emperor.

Men went there, go there, will go there so long as armies exist; some by force, others to have advancement.

Advancement is the country, the Emperor, the King.

Men went to the army because they knew that some, from common soldier, had become generals, marshals, princes, kings. "Why should I not do as they?" said every soldier as he put on his knapsack.

We each have a brevet of *maréchal* of France in our cartridge-box, it is only a question of getting it out.

"My neighbour has won a quaternary in the lottery, why should I not win one also?" That is the reasoning of all cooks; how many ten cent pieces have been lost in the hope of reaching that goal and without ever reaching it . . .

When we received a new rank, we were very glad; the next day we thought no more of it, our ideas were turned towards the day when we might receive another.

Man is thus made and will not change, he runs after a shadow which constantly flees before him. His life is short, and he always wishes to be older in the hope of possessing gains of which he will soon tire. "I congratulate you," I was one day saying to a captain who had just been promoted chief of battalion. "Now I want the officer's cross," he immediately replied, "*that completes a position.*" To complete his position, each paid court to his chief, because it was on that chief that his lot always depended. It was he who proposed the candidates to the Emperor or to the minister; one had therefore to be in his good graces, under pain of remaining in a disgraceful *statu quo*. From the corporal to the maréchal of the Empire, everyone courted the one who held the list of bounties. All the low bows which it was necessary to make had little by little changed the character of our army. The greed for baronies and of endowments had given our old officers, formerly republicans, all the habits of the courtiers of Versailles, and often in the most humble barrack, scenes worthy of the *Œil-de-Bœuf* have taken place.

After a battle, the Emperor granted a certain

number of crosses of the Legion of Honor to each regiment: eight, ten, twelve for the officers, and as many for the non-commissioned officers and soldiers; the colonel named the lucky ones. After Friedland, the number was eight in one regiment of the army, but among the officers newly decorated, there were but seven. "Who is the eighth?" was asked. Three months later, they knew; a relative of the colonel, arriving from France, had received the cross on the road, and on putting on his uniform for the first time, he had found it ornamented with the red ribbon. Truly, there was some little complaining, but in such low tones, that the colonel could not hear it. These gentlemen were great powers which one should not have as enemies. The fools alone spoke their minds freely, and I was always among the fools.



## THE CAMP





## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CAMP

In the days of Louis XIV and Louis XV, a camp was often but a theatrical performance given in honour of the ladies of the Court, tired of the pleasures of Versailles. The officers, the majority of them, only troubled themselves under the tent with gossip and love letters; they left the details of the service to the majors and to the self-made officers. The business of the colonels and generals was to arrive at the camp with fine equipages, numerous servants, a good cook, and to keep open table. Some ruined themselves at the camp, but they made themselves noticed. When it was necessary to risk their lives, these gentlemen did not spare themselves; they fought like brave men exactly as we have done and as we shall do when the occasion presents itself; but they had of the military profession only the roses without thorns,

for I do not call thorns the cannon shots and the drolleries of that sort.

The camp for them was a diversion, a means of putting themselves in evidence; each had the hope of being noticed by the King, by his mistresses; a word could be said in the King's select circle, and that word was worth a regiment. It is something prodigious, the amount spent then in a three months' camp. Maréchal de Boufflers, at the camp of Compiègne, in 1698, wasted or caused millions to be wasted; he had messengers who, each day, brought wines from all countries, the best game, the finest fish; he had the honour of dining Louis XIV and the King of England; that honour cost him dearly. In the poetical life of Versailles, men did not reckon, affairs we kept going. "See my steward," said a grand lord, "arrange with him; my duty is to spend, the rest concerns him."

In those times, when one was tired of a month's campaign, a truce was agreed upon between the outposts, and each took his quarters without the minister being notified. "When it rains, stay

away, we shall not budge; it is most disagreeable to get muddy."

To-day, when an army is on a campaign, it sleeps at the bivouac; it is only made to camp during the armistices or when peace is signed. In the cantonments, the troops are too scattered, it takes too long to assemble them, the soldiers can not be watched sufficiently; discipline suffers from it. In a garrison, it is seldom that enough regiments can be assembled to have grand manœuvres, while at a camp anything may be included, there is always some space.

A camp is a city of wood and straw, sometimes of canvas carefully built on lines, with its streets large and small, long and short; the whole is kept excessively clean. A camp is a mighty fine thing, but I maintain that a stay in a city is infinitely preferable.

In general, to build our camps, we demolish villages; at Tilsit, each regiment had some thirty to cut up; one or two were assigned to each company. We had a great quantity of carriages and *found* horses which served to transport the ma-

terials. With such resources, it is easy to believe that our camps were superb; those who have not seen them can not imagine what they were. When the barracks had been made of uniform dimensions, each busied himself decorating his own in an elegant manner, and soon the order came to take model for certain things from such a company, from such a regiment. The soldiers, piqued at being obliged to begin again, invented new decorations to make the innovators work in their turn. There was no existing reason why this should ever end. It may be said that a camp is never finished: as long as an army stays there, there is work to do.

The two Emperors and the King of Prussia came to visit our camp, and we performed grand manœuvres in their presence.<sup>16</sup> General Mouton (since comte de Lobau), aide de camp to Napoleon, commanded in chief. We filed before the three sovereigns and before an army of princes, marshals, and generals of three nations. I do not believe that there has ever been brought together in any part of the globe so large a quantity of embroidered clothes. Napoleon commanded that

multitude in his plain uniform of mounted chasseur; Alexander and Frederick-William galloped behind him, not permitting their horses to take the same step as his. Later, they made Napoleon pay dearly for the glory with which he overwhelmed them at Tilsit.

In passing in front of our barracks, the King of Prussia stopped to talk with us; the letter-box of the regiment, which on campaign is placed near the flag, astonished him greatly.

"Of what use is that box?" asked Frederick William.

"Sire, to receive the letters which each one of us writes to France."

"During a campaign, is your mail so organised that it can take care of the letters of all the soldiers?"

"Yes, sire, it leaves every day, every day it arrives, and we receive the Paris papers in two weeks."

"It is admirable! Certainly, gentlemen, it is impossible to make finer camps than yours, but you must admit that you make ugly villages."

The Queen of Prussia came to Tilsit. Na-

oleon was very attentive to her. It was a singular sight for a spectator, all these assembled sovereigns, going out together every day, eating at the same table, in short looking like old friends, they who a few days before, tore each other to pieces in their official gazettes, weapons more dangerous for kings than the cannon. Besides, this recent friendship seemed sincere between Alexander and Napoleon, and if there are circumstances in politics when one may trust appearances, it is probable that at Tilsit they acted in good faith. The Queen of Prussia was very beautiful, I saw her; she was said to have been very amiable, I know nothing about that; but it is certain that she obtained many concessions from Napoleon. This pretty Queen dining one day with the three sovereigns, filled a glass of champagne, and said with that infinite grace which she possessed to a supreme degree, a grace which at this moment came to the aid of politics at bay: "To the health of Napoleon the Great! he has taken our states and he returns them to us!" The Emperor arose, returned the bow with courtesy, and





The Meeting at Tilsit.





replied to the Queen: "Do not drink all, Madame."

After the armistice which followed the battle of Znaïm, the whole army camped until peace was restored. We were in the neighbourhood of Brünn and Austerlitz, on the former battlefield. Napoleon wished to give himself a second representation of the battle of Austerlitz; on a beautiful day in September, the whole army occupied the same position, the same manœuvres took place as four years before. Everything passed pleasantly, the regiments which represented the Russian and Austrian corps allowed themselves to be vanquished as agreed in advance, and no one was drowned in the famous lake of Sokolnitz which was not frozen.

Louis XV liked to give the ladies of the Court representations of battles; one day he wished to have a make believe siege. The memoirs of the time speak very seriously of the courage shown by the besiegers and besieged, all inspired by the King's presence. The place was stormed, the mines exploded, cardboard heads, arms and legs

were seen flying in the air; it would have been difficult to carry imitation further. Nevertheless they did not stop there. The besieged were obliged to sign a capitulation which, having come down to us, proves how much these gentlemen liked to seriously busy themselves with trifles or else play soldiers.<sup>17</sup>

The most favourable spot for the location of a camp is always the neighbourhood of a beautiful château which is used as general headquarters; as soon as the staff is installed, all is as well as can be.

An encamped regiment must occupy the same place as when under arms. Usually each company has six barracks standing in three rows. Opposite the centre of these barracks and towards the rear are the kitchens. Farther are to be found the barrack of the captain and that of the lieutenants; farther still that of the chief of battalion, and behind all these is that of the colonel, placed facing the centre of the regiment.

The colonel's barrack exists, but usually it is not occupied; these gentlemen prefer to lodge at the nearest village, of course this is when we are

far from the enemy, or when peace is made; for, in times of war they are with the soldiers night and day.

In camp, the officers eat, either at the canteen-woman's, who keeps the restaurant with a dining-room holding one hundred, or in their own quarters, several eating together. In every company there is always to be found a soldier who can cook fairly well. And then, on occasion, everyone helps, and the result is often a delicious dinner.

During a campaign, the officers are entitled to the distributions of supplies; they receive their rations of bread, meat, salt, rice, etc. When eight or ten get together, and know how to agree, they live very nicely, provided a few supplementary provisions can be found at the near by town.

In camp, the day is spent in visiting the barracks, in inspections, parades, drills, manœuvres, a life certainly most agreeable for those who like it. When one has books, one reads in one's leisure moments; when one has none, one walks, and then in the evening one plays, one drinks hot wine in the midst of the smoke of pipes. This

takes place under the canteen-woman's tent or in the barrack of each officer in turn.

If the officers play for money, the soldiers play fillips, nothing is more comical than to see an old veteran receiving fillips on his nose. Sometimes they are administered by a young recruit, which does not prevent the old soldier from bearing them without complaint, but not without making a very amusing grimace. And then, to vary the amusements, *drogue* is played; the loser having to wear on his nose a pair of wooden pincers which squeeze his nostrils. You have often noticed these little scenes when passing near a guard-house, or else in looking over a collection of prints.

## THE CANTONMENTS



## CHAPTER IX

### THE CANTONMENTS

The cantonments are the thing which the soldiers like best. The bivouac finally bores one: it rains, it is cold there; camp life is too hard, there is too much work to do: one must be at one time a mason, roofer and carpenter. At the garrison, the service is hard: there is too much guard duty, drill periodically returns each day with its wearisome monotony.

In the cantonments, all that does not exist, there is nothing to do or very little. The companies, scattered in several villages, do not often assemble; each soldier finds at his host's food and shelter; he walks around with his stick in his hand, plays the wit with the men, the sentimental with the ladies, and sometimes everybody is satisfied.

In the cantonments, military service left us long hours of leisure, and we hunted. Master of the country, the game belonged to us by right of con-

quest. If this manner of spending our time was disagreeable to the barons and grand lords, who owned the forests where we hunted, it was very pleasing to the plebeian citizens at whose homes we were lodged. First because in bringing to their kitchens the contents of our game-bags, they found in it a useful compensation for the expenses incurred for us; and then they were not sorry to see their lords and masters, so jealous of their hunting rights, annoyed in their turn, after having so often vexed the others.

When we were not hunting, we called on each other, and for this important occasion, the burgo-master was commanded to put in requisition a carriage or else a sleigh. Our trips were so often repeated that the horses were constantly occupied in serving our caprices. These perpetual visits interfered with agriculture, commerce was suspended, the markets were short of supplies, famine was impending; an order of the day forbade under the most severe penalty to place any carriage in requisition.

I pretended to have no knowledge of it, and every time I had a mind to change air, without



the slightest hesitation, I ordered harnessed the carriage of the burgomaster at whose house I lodged. My man complained, and my arrest followed. The honourable body of sub-lieutenants sided with me; I received numerous visits from the most distant points of our cantonments. At these secret meetings, we meditated a striking vengeance against the informing burgomaster, and this is the one adopted.

During a fine night, I say fine, because it was pouring, we took apart the carriage, the innocent cause of my arrest; and at the risk of breaking our necks, we had the patience to hoist it piece by piece over the roof. When we had everything up there, we put it together again and placed it between two chimneys; it was ready to start, it only needed horses.

At break of day, the burgomaster having to go on a trip, wants to harness, but he finds no carriage; he shouts and complains that he has been robbed. People run in all directions; they seek, but do not find. Finally, a child perceived the carriage in the singular coach-house where we had placed it. Imagine, if you can, the anger of the

poor man; it was enough to make one die of laughter; he swore loudly and vigorously enough to make his house fall. By their jests, our soldiers increased his anger the more. One said that thus located, the carriage was safe from thieves; another, that by taking the horses on the roof, it could soon be got down, etc. Finally the entire village assembled, everyone set to work, it took them three days to undo what we had done in a single night.

If there existed good cantonments, some very bad ones were at times found. When the country, devastated by the two armies, offered no resources, genius was required to secure the daily sustenance. For example, in the direction of Osterode, after the battle of Eylau, those rascals of peasants, to use the soldiers' expressions, hid their provisions under the ground and in the woods. But no matter what they did, each day a new hiding place was discovered.

Our old foxes walked about, ramrod in hand, sounding the freshly turned earth; the result of these excursions was put in the stores of each company to be distributed equally to all. The art of

feeding an army during a campaign has never been known among us, at least it has never been put into practice. We had a swarm of employees with large and small staffs; these gentlemen were busy making their fortunes, they have succeeded by the grace of God. Their principal care was to provide for the Imperial guard, and the rest made shift as best it could. When the picked troops had received supplies for four days, it was said in the Emperor's salons that the army was well supplied; the papers repeated, amplified, paraphrased, and everything was as fine as could be in the best world possible.

One day soldiers found in a hiding place some sacks of oats; it was a piece of good luck, for our horses only lived on rank straw taken from the roofs. The officers of the regiment cantoned in the neighbouring villages, having heard this news, came to visit us so as to have the opportunity of treating their horses to a peck of oats. Each day the same thing was repeated, the supply was diminishing perceptibly. Laborie bethought himself of a rather good expedient to remedy this. He instructed the soldier whose duty it was to put the

horses in the stable, never to give them oats whenever he said to him: "Give the horse oats, *do you hear?*" and to put some in the trough when he simply said: "Give the horse oats." So that, barring a few exceptions, when an officer said to us on alighting:

"Will you see that my horse gets oats?"

"Certainly," replied Laborie. Then turning towards the soldier:

"Give the horse oats, *do you hear?*"

"Yes, lieutenant."

The officer went away again. A few digs of the spurs produced the same effect as the oats. Later, I told this anecdote, people laughed much over it: the expression "*Do you hear?*" even became a saying: for when we had had a good lunch, we did not fail to say: it was without *do you hear?*

We often went fishing in a pond near Peterswald, for to live, we had to make use of all possible resources. One day, when, pole in hand, we were fixedly looking on the cork floating on the surface of the water, one of our comrades who was also fishing, noticed that his hook was caught by some fagots which he saw at the bottom of the

pond; with a stick he tries to move the obstacle, at once a body comes to the surface. Great astonishment on our part; we continue, other bodies appear; in short we counted thirty-eight, among them that of a woman. They were naked and all appeared to have been killed by blows of an axe.

Notice was at once sent to the colonel, to the general, to the marshal; the village was surrounded, all the inhabitants cast in prison. An investigation was begun; search was made everywhere, uniforms and weapons were discovered, and it was proven that a French detachment which was thought to have been taken prisoner of war, had perished in that village, on the same night, the same hour, and had been a victim of a new Sicilian Vespers. Thirty-eight inhabitants were shot, and the village totally destroyed by fire.

What renders military life very agreeable, is that situations vary continually; when one finds himself in an unpleasant position, one is easily consoled, soon that will change. One day, in the mud to the knees, lacking food and straw on which to sleep; the next day, in an excellent château

stocked with pretty ladies, and possessed of a kitchen supplied with all necessary things and cellars filled to the vaults.

All these things combined are an agreeable diversion, but they must be combined: *sine Baccho et Cerere friget Venus*, which may be translated that it is difficult to talk sweet nonsense to the ladies when one has not dined.

## THE GARRISON





## CHAPTER X

### THE GARRISON

The priest must read his breviary every day, the drill is for the officer what the breviary is for the priest. It is a very amusing thing, this drill; after having gone through it for thirty years, one must continue it, unless one retires. When one does not know it, one must learn it, it is quite natural; when one knows it, one must teach it to others; it is just; when all the regiment manœuvres well, it must be repeated once more to show that one knows it. So that one is always drilling. An officer is always returning from drill or else going to it. If his sergeant-major meets him, he is certain to hear these sacramental words: "Lieutenant, or captain, we shall have the drill at such an hour to-day, if the weather permits."

Captain G——, of the Imperial guard, *had to* go through the drill. I have seen him sick, in bed, command the manual of arms to the pun-

ished men whom he caused to be taken out of the guard-room. One day the hour strikes, no men appear, he sends for his sergeant-major :

“ Well ! ” he says to him, “ how about my punished squad ? ”

“ Captain, the guard-room is empty, we have no men under arrest.”

“ That concerns you, arrest some.”

In cold weather of 10 degrees he ordered those poor devils to shoulder arms in the yard, and woe to him who made the slightest movement. Sometimes, frozen to the very bones, they fell in a faint on the pavement.

“ Is the musket broken ? ” asked the captain.

“ No.”

“ That’s lucky.”

Sergeant Roussel was an able instructor ; none knew better than he how to make the soldier carry arms, and go through the various steps while keeping their shoulders squared, a most essential thing in such a case. Naturally gentle he did not allow his modest mouth to make use of those gross expressions, those guard-house oaths which his equals always used. When he was very angry,

he called his recruits *candidates*. "Just look at those *candidates*, they are as limp as rags; they all manœuvre like seamstresses who have eaten cabbage."

You know that a soldier when marching must start with the left foot; once Sergeant Roussel drilling his men through various steps, orders *march*. One soldier starts with the right foot while his neighbour raises the left; Sergeant Roussel was standing in the back; this lack of harmony in the lines of all these legs astonishes his sense of exactness; but on seeing the effect he is mistaken in the cause, he comes forward very angry: "Who is the *candidate*," he says, "who has both his legs up?"

He was not very strong on orthography. One day, in a report on the guard, wishing to write down the strength of his post composed of four men (*quatre hommes*), he bravely wrote in large letters KATROM. Sergeant Roussel was then only Corporal Roussel.

Strictly speaking, he did not need to know any more than that; but Laborie who, enlisted in 1780, had been made corporal there and then in 1789,

doubtless because of the great events of that time, then sergeant in 1794, sub-lieutenant in 1802 and lieutenant in 1806, Laborie making a report on the distribution of bread, and wishing to state that it was not good and not sufficiently baked (*le pain n'est pas bon ni n'est pas assez cuit*) wrote the whole thing in one word and in the following manner: "Pinpaboninépaasécui."

And I could mention colonels and generals who knew no better. The one who said while speaking to Napoleon: "Monsieur, sire, I do not know *'matics*, but I can give a good sabre blow," was general in the Imperial Guard, and certainly never was brigade commanded by a braver man.

And that general who had received the order to proceed with his brigade as far as Lintz and to remain mounted on the road to Vienna and who, like Don Quixote, did actually remain mounted in the middle of the highway and would still be there if new orders had not made him dismount!

And that colonel, commander of a fortified town, who received the order to redouble his watchfulness so as not to be surprised by the enemy; the equinox being about due, the nights becoming

longer, he was to be on his guard, etc. He reviewed his posts, his artillery, and when he was certain that everything was in condition, he exclaimed: "Let him come, that d—— General Equinox, we'll receive him with cannon shots." These men have conquered Europe; besides it is not necessary to know so very much to get killed.

At the garrison, in the cafés, billiards play a great part; it is there that the officer squanders his money, wasting almost all the time he does not devote to military service. I say about all, because the ladies claim a part of it, and that is certainly the best employed.

The officers meet at the café on the way to the parade, to the drill, and on the way back. It is there that the army news are spread, those of the regiment and the tittle-tattle of the barracks. They gamble, drink and smoke there: an officer is always found ready to play a game of billiards, smoke a cigar, have a drink. The glass of spirits is a thing that the young men newly dressed in the uniform dare not refuse; they would fear to be taken for a fop. To take a drop, is a custom essentially military; one affects an old trooper air after having

swallowed the stuff and draining the glass to the last drop, one tells some good drinking story. We at times heard some that were worthy of Rabelais. These habits are very injurious to health, all know it, but all wish to imitate the others. For a long time I drank *a drop* because I considered it very necessary; for form's sake, I regularly drank my three or four glasses of spirits a day.

These pleasures, if they are pleasures, are the result of idleness, and are very costly; it is not unusual to see officers who, in this manner, spend in advance the month's pay. I have been through that many times; what I received was not sufficient to settle my open account at the garrison café.

A sub-lieutenant of my acquaintance had been a sutler during the first campaigns of the Revolution, and so as not to derogate, he had married Margot the canteen-woman. On receiving his epaulet, he left the lucrative business of serving drinks to others, but he retained for the tavern a very decided taste. Every evening, man and wife went arm in arm, the latter in a velvet hat with feathers, the former in uniform, to a wretched

pot-house; and there, while drinking their bottle, they sang at the top of their voices. Nothing was more amusing than to see that loving couple bawl in chorus: "*As soon as the dawn*, etc.," and that without a smile, with imperturbable seriousness. Every day they began again, they would have been unable to go to sleep had they not sung their drinking song, to the very last verse. Whether the tavern was full, or they were alone, made no difference; they looked at no one. Enjoying themselves in their own way, it may be said that these two were very happy. Happiness! it is everywhere that one believes it to be.

When we were to remain a long time in a garrison, we had two ways of jovially passing the time. If a lodge of free-masons existed, we presented ourselves *en masse*, or else we organised one of our own. Everyone knows that while seeking the philosopher's stone, the brothers like to enjoy themselves, to feast. In many regiments, the officers formed a lodge of which the colonel was the master.

After free-masonry came theatricals. This is another very pleasant way of passing the time when



one is young. At Magdeburg, the theatre hall of the town was exploited by bad German comedians; they refused to lend it to us, we immediately made another out of a fodder store. The garrison was at that time composed of twenty-five thousand men; each officer gave monthly one day's pay to defray the expenses of lighting, costumes and decorations. Soon our theatre was perfectly organised, planned, fully supplied. It goes without saying that there was no paying at the door, and we were always applauded. Tickets we distributed in the town, we had a full house, that is to say all the agreeableness of the profession without any of the inconveniences. Add to this that the wives of the officers, war commissaries, and supply clerks, who acted with us, were very amiable.

At Magdeburg, the officer-actors performed no duties; as the time spent behind the scenes served for the pleasure of their comrades, the latter did guard duty, commanded the drills, and everybody was happy. We played everything, tragedy, comedy, opera, vaudeville. The orchestra, chosen among the musicians of all the regiments, was per-



fect. We have acted certain plays, on our Magdeburg stage, just as well as at the best theatres of France. We received all the novelties from Paris; they were studied at once and played as soon as at Lyons, Rouen, and Bordeaux. The poor German actors were unable to stand the competition of comedians who played gratis, and they went elsewhere to seek their fortune.

There was some little friction as to the distribution of parts, and as is usually the case, each wanted the brilliant one. When there was a part in which the actor had only to bring in a letter from *Araminte*, no player would have it, we were obliged to make use of a private for that service. All these little quarrels occasionally caused schism among the players; we separated, came together again, it was as at the theatres of Paris.

One finds army men who always want to introduce the military subordination and hierarchy into everything. Some claimed the character of Alceste as their own, because they were battalion chiefs; others of Scapin or Mascarille, because they were war commissaries; a captain of grenadiers never would accept the part of Trissotin, because he

would have been called a scoundrel by Clitandre, without being able to get any satisfaction.

These pretensions were much greater with the wives of colonels or generals. They demanded a sort of subordination, marks of respect from the other women. Each had a party composed of officers of *her* regiment; often some have been seen, like Achilles, to withdraw to their tents, taking with them a crowd of malcontents. But ennui soon got the better of them, diplomatic negotiations were begun, and the dissenting troop came back shortly after, with two or three plays learned with which they enriched our repertory.

Let us speak of our garrison balls; they were as they are in Paris, there was much walking there, not much dancing. We had a system of piling in as many as possible; in this manner the lovers (they were very numerous in our regiments) were nearer their sweethearts, and the mammas, separated from their daughters by a wall of uniforms, could see nothing. Notes were exchanged, pressures of the hand, winks, whispered sweet nothings took the place of dancing, and everyone thought the ball delightful.

With women, it is the same thing; the ball is but a pretext, an opportunity to see the happy mortal one does not expect to meet elsewhere. And then, in a parlour a tender conversation would be too much noticed; when one dances, the music, the movements, the crowd, create a useful diversion. At the ball, the women appear to the best advantage, without considering the wonderful dresses; they may walk, jump, go, come, instead of remaining seated, stiff on their haunches, as straight as asparagus, a most uncomfortable and ungraceful position. Look a lady in the face, a moment after, you will see her turn her head to make you admire her profile.

Behold in a parlour several young women assembled; they embroider, sew, read, speak, all is done very seriously. A young man comes in, suddenly they are seen to whisper; they seem to be telling one another the most amusing things, for they laugh very much. Yet they have really said nothing, but their faces have become animated, which sets off the brightness of their beautiful eyes. If, when the young man has entered, the shoulders of these young ladies were covered by a shawl, be certain

that, five minutes after, without fear of catching cold, they will have caused to disappear everything that may hinder their forms from being admired. A hundred times have I paid particular attention, and each time the shawl has slipped behind the arm-chair.

## CORPS VISITS



## CHAPTER XI

### CORPS VISITS

Corps visits are really so entertaining a thing for the visitors as well as for those visited that it would be a pity not to devote a short chapter to them.

A Chinese proverb says with reason: "When a man has ten paces to go, and has gone nine, he has gone half way." We, who are not obliged to know the language of the Celestial Empire, say prosaically, in kitchen style: "The tail is the hardest to skin." When a regiment is travelling and has reached its halting place, the soldiers go and rest at their lodgings, the officer has not finished his day's work. If he has reached a large city, he must during two or three hours walk the streets to visit the *préfet*, the general, the bishop, the mayor; so wills the regulations of 1791, an ordinance very wise, no doubt, but very boring for those who have to carry it out.

Whatever the weather, you have to go; you arrive, and the colonel speaks:

“*Monsieur le Préfet*, I have the honour of presenting to you the corps of officers of such and such a regiment; I am glad, *Monsieur le Préfet*, that the orders of the minister of war, in sending me to your city (or in making me go through it) have procured me the honour of knowing so distinguished an administrator.”

“*Monsieur le colonel*, I myself am much flattered to make the acquaintance of the officers of so fine a regiment.” (The regiments are always fine.) “I was at my window when you arrived, I found your companies of grenadiers superb.” (The companies of grenadiers are always superb.) “You have had very bad weather to-day?” (Sometimes *M. le Préfet* said that we had had good weather.)

“Yes, *Monsieur*, but the roads of your department are so fine, so well cared for!” (The *préfet* bowed.)

“Your companies of footsoldiers are composed of less tall men, but they have appeared to me



strong, vigorous, clean, full of enthusiasm." (The colonel bowed.)

"A thing which struck me in the villages we have gone through to-day, is the air of comfort, of happiness of all the inhabitants." (The *préfet* bowed.)

"As to your middle companies, one would hardly believe, on seeing them, that from these the picked regiments have been selected." (The colonel bowed.)

"We saw, on the roadside, ploughmen, broad-shouldered, young, ruddy, full of spirits; they sang as they worked."

"They were rejoicing at the prospects of being a part of the next conscription; they are anxious to march. Yours is such a fine career, *Messieurs*, in the times of glory in which we are living."

"Yours, *Monsieur le Préfet*, is not less honourable."

"In which department do you recruit?"

"In Ardennes, Finistère, Calvados."

"These departments furnish a fine species of men." (The reply was the same for all departments.)

"Yes, *Monsieur*, they are slow at becoming accustomed to military service, but as soon as they are . . ."

"They are very good, I know it, your regiment has shown its capacity." (All the regiments have shown their capacity.)

"Under Napoleon the Great, that is not a merit."

"You are fortunate, *Messieurs*, to serve him on the field of battle; if I were younger, I should march with you." (And the *préfet*, raising his head, immediately laid his hand on his sword.)

"If the Emperor needs good soldiers, enlightened and conscientious administrators are equally necessary to him." (And the *préfet* bowed.)

"Let us work together for the glory of the hero who governs us; *Messieurs*, we shall strive to imitate you."

The colonel bowed, the *préfet* bowed, everybody bowed, it was a moving sight. We then called on the other authorities, where the conversation was subject to a few variations of details. With the general we spoke of the profession; with the bishop

we talked of his cathedral which could be seen from afar and which appeared to be a superb edifice, a fact of which the colonel rarely sought to assure himself by close inspection; but everywhere the companies of grenadiers, of footsoldiers and the fine species of men came up again. All this sometimes ended by an invitation to dinner which made an agreeable change.

Speaking of dinners, I must not forget to say a word with regard to those given by Maréchal Davout. That brave marshal, among high military qualities, had an awful fault which made him many enemies among the gastronomists of the army. When he invited us to dinner, it was a piece of perfidy on his part, not that his meals were without ceremony, but they were of despairing briefness.

We sat down at table, ten minutes after we had to rise, because the host set the example. The first time I had the honour of sitting at the marshal's table, I was caught; hardly had I broken my bread and begun to eat of the first relishes to prepare the way than the signal of retreat was given.

"Where are we going?" I asked my neighbours.

"We have finished."

"Dining?"

"Yes."

"But I have not begun."

"So much the worse for you."

"It's an abominable trick, a wilful injury."

"Agreed! but the marshal imitates the Emperor."

"One should not always follow the examples of the great,

*"Quand sur une personne on prétend se régler,  
C'est par les beaux côtés qu' il faut lui ressembler."*

But on the second invitation, things were different; I manœuvred rapidly, my attacks were lively; everything within my reach was carried by storm. I had finished long before the others, and I told the same neighbours that the meal appeared to me much too long.

In the Grand Army, almost all the generals had a soldier-cook. As conscription applied to all classes of society, cooks were not more exempt than

others. But as soon as their talents were recognised, the greatest care was taken that the lives of these gentlemen should not be exposed to the hazards of war, nor their precious healths endangered by the inclemencies of sentry duty. They did nothing else but occupy themselves with the art of tickling the palate.

But these artists worked much and well only during a campaign, at the bivouac, in certain cantonments taken in times of war. Then from all sides, receiving the necessary materials, they had nothing else to do than to make them undergo the preparations inspired by the genius often hidden under a linen cap. In those lucky circumstances, the generals, the colonels invited the officers; from all sides you heard the clicking of forks; open table was kept everywhere; the peasant supplied, we felt perfectly at home. But as soon as order was re-established, and we returned to the garrison, with many of these higher officers, the cook became a useless personage. Reduced to preparing the modest *pot-au-feu*, his science served no one; he spoiled his hand.

The Emperor gave his generals endowments,

presents, so that they might spend much; some of them overdid it, but the majority sinned the other way. One evening, at the Tuileries, General L—— arrives. Napoleon shakes his hand and notices that drops of water glisten on the gilt embroideries. He turns and orders the first chamberlain he sees to find out in what carriage the general came. Soon he is informed that he came in a cab; numbered conveyances not being admitted in the court of the Tuileries, the general had gone a short distance on foot, which explains the presence of the raindrops.

The next day a chamberlain comes to the house of the man with the wet coat.

“The Emperor requests me, *Monsieur*, to offer you this carriage, these horses; the finest to be found in Paris. The coachmen and laquais have been paid for a year. Here is the bill of cost; the amount will be deducted from your pay.”

General Friant was not only a very brave man, but besides a very good man whom everybody liked. When the officers of the corps made him a visit, he made us no speech; he was not a phraseologist by nature, he spoke but little, but what he said

always made an impression, because it came from the heart. His face, bronzed by the sun of Egypt, his lively bright eyes, his natural warrior-like pose, all that gave to his every word keenness which many orators would like to add to their figures of rhetoric.

“ Good morning, comrades, when one sees you, one pines for battle; just think of making peace when one has such regiments! ” He meant it; even when he simply said to us: “ Come in, *Messieurs*, I am very glad to see you,” one could see that he spoke the truth. General Friant was a brave and worthy man; never did officer call on him in fear, never did he leave him displeased. What I have said of the officers may be applied to the sergeants, the corporals, the privates. That man had the talent of making himself liked by all. That talent is rare.

Other generals had acquired aristocratic habits, savouring of the age of Louis XIV at a league's distance; on the visits paid to them, we were received with pomp; you would have thought it a presentation at Versailles in the days of the old monarchy. Some disdained the title of general to

have themselves called *Monseigneur* or *Excellence*. Turenne thought more of his title of vicomte which he owed to chance than he did of that of Marshal of France.

It is surprising that in that Imperial army, offspring of the armies of 1792, the transition should have been so short between Republican ruggedness and servility. The patriots of levy quickly fashioned themselves to the manners of the old Court, and this without opposition. Leaving their huts for châteaux, they were not sorry to try their hand at the *tyrant's* part. The first among them became princes, dukes, counts; the second barons and chevaliers. The idea that one could derogate in abandoning the glorious title of citizen never struck anyone. Those who remained plain *Monsieur* dared say nothing, because they feared to retard the epoch when the entail in Westphalia would cause them to enter in the privileged caste. Besides, these entails were dearly earned; conquered sword in hand, they became the reward of the blood shed in all Europe. Friant had three horses killed under him at the battle of Austerlitz; he put three



horse's heads in his arms; I know of no nobler blazon.

The French officer, with his pride, his brilliant bravery, is something of a courtier. The habit he has of hierarchical obedience, combined with his greed for advancement, gives him that flattering tone in his intercourse with some, with which he at times indemnifies himself with others. At that time, a line written by the general-in-chief became a new rank, gave an entail; a name slipped in the bulletin created a military reputation and contained a whole future.

When we travelled in Spain, the officer commanding the advance guard sent for the alcalde in every village he went through and ordered him to have the bells rung on the arrival of the general-in-chief. He had learned his speech in Spanish by heart, but he knew no more than that. Sometimes the alcalde replied:

*"Puès, senor, que no aï campanas."* (*Monsieur, there are no bells.*) The officer, who did not understand the answerless objection, continued on his way repeating: *"Toca, toca las campanas."*

While we were at Posen, there arrived the King, the Queen of Saxony and the Princess Augusta, their daughter. They were going to Warsaw to visit their new subjects in the grand-duchy. The garrison rendered them military honours; there filed before us the most numerous collection of old carriages ever seen anywhere. I do not know where that good prince had found all the old boxes that carried him and his suite. They certainly dated from 1515, the time when the first coaches were made in Germany. You should have seen all those officers of the Court, all that composed the *bootless* of the King, the appearance of those fellows, their clothes and especially their wigs ending in a tail an ell in length. The most exaggerated affair of this sort that one could see in the theatres of the boulevard would still be very far from reality.

The next day, January 1st, 1808, all the French and Polish officers had the honour of being presented to Their Majesties. General Dombrowski gave us during this visit a rather comic little scene. He was near the King and Queen, presented to them in turn the Polish officers, bestirred himself

immensely, spoke, bowed, and made his spurs ring in the Polish manner. On his turning, one of the rowels caught in the Queen's dress; the floor was slippery, he lost his equilibrium and fell. The dress of Her Majesty was torn from bottom to top, she herself would have been dragged down in the fall if someone had not caught her. All those present were dying with suppressed laughter; never was there anything so funny as the swarthy and moustachiod face of the old general; he lost himself in excuses, he could find no expressions strong enough, and I am quite certain that never in his campaigns was he in so awkward a position. What did the King do? The King began to laugh, the Queen imitated him; example is contagious, everyone did the same, even the old general. Never perhaps has a Sovereign's audience been so merry; each was in a paroxysm of convulsive, inextinguishable laughter, which still continued when we found ourselves in the street.

One day when I was absolutely without a cent, a thing, in fact, which happened to me sometimes, I had recourse to the purse of some friends. Montro . . . one of these, or so called, re-

sembled the ant of the fable; he was not a lender by nature, and refused me on the pretext that he was like myself without money; I believed it, or at least I pretended to believe it.

A few days after, we were at the table, and contrary to his habit Montro . . . came in last. He was pale, choking with anger, trying to speak, but unable to do so. He had so many things to say that the words, pressing each other to come out at once, obstructed the passage. We heard here and there some interjection very expressive, no doubt, but which told us nothing.

"What's the matter with you?" "Are you ill?" "Have you a fever?" "Are you insane?" These questions, or twenty others analogous to the circumstance, are hurled at him from all sides of the table. Finally, our man, putting order in his ideas, tells us that he has been robbed during the night, that a purse containing twenty-five beautiful *louis*, saved piece by piece, in depriving himself of all, had disappeared; that he suspects a Jew, his host, of being guilty of the theft, and that if he can secure proof, he will try to have him hanged.

Montro . . . was not beloved by his comrades; he lived aloof, and like a *miser*, to use a barrack expression. I saw at a glance that his misadventure amused everyone; that far from pitying him, each of those present whispered: "Good, the Jew did well." I thought that I would take advantage of the circumstance and avenge myself a little for the refusal I had experienced. With tragic-comic seriousness, I addressed the merry company: "Gentlemen," said I, "our comrade certainly has a fever, the mania by which he is possessed to pile *écu* on *écu* occupies him to such an extent when he is in good health, his mind is so busy incessantly working on the words silver, pay, gold *louis*, that to-day, when he is ill, it continues the same work through habit. The desire he had, when in good health, to possess fifty *louis*, causes him to believe to-day that he had that amount; the fear he would have had to lose them finds itself changed, by an attack of fever, to the certainty of having been robbed.

"God forbid, *Messieurs*, that I should dare to state something of which I am not certain! I am incapable of it, and you all know it. Recently

I needed some hundred francs which one of you very obligingly lent me. Our comrade to whom I had first applied, replied that he was like myself, penniless; I believed him, for he gave me his word. Now, *Messieurs*, the word of an officer is a sacred thing, we must all believe in it, we do believe in it, and everything that may later be said in a moment of delirium caused by fever should not awaken the slightest suspicion in our minds. I therefore conclude that this word of honour be accepted at its full worth; that what our poor sick comrade has said be considered void, and that, in view of the condition in which he is, we induce him to go to bed at once, and without dinner."

Mirabeau thundering on the speaker's platform, never made a greater impression on his hearers; applause broke out from all sides; loud bravos shook the rafters. Montro . . . furious, attempted to retort. All said to him: "Go to bed, Bazile, go to bed." Then Dr. Margaillan, who was present, arose, saying that matter was within his province, and approached to feel his pulse. Our man protested, struggled on his chair; four powerful fellows held him down. When he had

counted the pulsations with comical gravity, the physician declared that the ailment was a *gastro-cephalalgia*, that he must be abundantly phlebotomised; that an absolute diet was indispensable; that he should be well purged so as to clear his brain, and that in the meantime he had to go to bed.

Montro . . .'s eyes bulged out of their sockets; he was beside himself with rage, because every time he attempted to speak, his voice was drowned by thirty other voices which prevented him from being heard. "You are sick!" was shouted from every side. "You have a fever!" "You have gastro-cephalalgia, the doctor said so." "Were you not sick, you should be compelled to become so."

"You will answer for this," he said, leaving the hall in a paroxysm of fury hard to describe. He was answered that the provocations of a feverish person were not to be considered, and that he would do well to go to bed.

The funny thing about this affair, is that Montro . . . was ill, that he really had a fever, and that the doctor's prescription was car-



ried out in its entirety. When cured, our man attempted to be ugly; but he was made to understand that it was not an equal match, and time mended everything.

I have never seen anyone love money as Montro . . . did. This passion was rare among the young men of the army; their chief occupation was to lead a merry life and not to hoard. When Montro . . . received his pay, he rushed to a Jew, purchased gold, and put it away in a leather belt which he kept about him at all times, since the adventure just mentioned. After having converted everything he could into gold, if he had a fraction of twelve or fifteen francs left over, he borrowed enough to complete the value of a gold *napoleon*, so that he could place it with the others.

Montro . . . did not profit by his hoarding. The Cossacks, after having killed the miser, put his gold into circulation.

But let us return to our corps visits; it is especially on January 1st that we have our fill; during that blessed day, the *amateurs* may have as much as they like of them. It begins in the morning



very early and lasts until evening. If one happens to be in Paris, one begins again the next day, which does not make it more agreeable.

All these visits are made hierarchically from rank to rank; the sub-lieutenant, after having received the compliments of the sergeants and corporals, takes them to the lieutenant, who in turn takes them to the captain. The three then betake themselves to the chief of battalion who, followed by his subordinates, calls on the colonel. The latter takes them all to the brigadier-general. There they find another corps of officers; and they take advantage of the opportunity to wish them a happy new year, then they go to the lieutenant-general, where they meet another brigade and the ceremony is repeated. You can imagine that the snow ball continuing to increase and never decreasing, must finally be quite large, and that is why the Parisians are all amazed, when on the first of January a swarm of officers impedes the traffic of the omnibuses. At each visit one talks shop a bit, so as not to lose the habit. On that day little faults are pardoned; the doors of the guard-room are opened, but as a frightful quantity of

glasses of spirits are drunk, it is again full to its utmost capacity the next day, which compensates.

At the high officials' on whom we called, the corps visits almost always ended by an invitation to dinner for the next day, when the regiment was to remain in the town.

At Fulde, one-half of the officers were invited at the prince primate's. He was a man of remarkable intelligence and very well educated; small, thin, his face had some analogy with that of the monkey. He received us in a purple cossack; he was a bishop. Monseigneur had a very pretty sapajou, dressed like a Versailles courtier, spangled breeches, hat with feathers, embroidered coat, sword, nothing was missing. The animal was gambolling around his master, imitating the salutations which he saw made, and returning them to everybody.

Soon the dinner is announced, the bishop invites us to step into the dining-room; each one hastens to obey the pleasant call.

Everyone had crossed the threshold of the hall, the bishop remained alone with his monkey and

an officer who was making objections to going in first.

"I beg you, Monseigneur."

"But, Monsieur, I am in my own house."

"I wish at least to allow your son to pass ahead."

At these words, a burst of laughter, not unlike the explosion of a magazine, broke out from all parts of the dining-room; the bishop laughed so that we were anxious for his life; the officer alone remained serious. . . . He did not understand.



## THE REVIEWS



## CHAPTER XII

### THE REVIEWS

A review is sometimes a very amusing sight for the public, seated or standing, in the pit; but for the actors, it is another matter. The former may withdraw whenever it wishes, the latter must remain until the end of the play.

When the Emperor ordered a review for noon, the generals passed the inspection at eleven o'clock, the colonels had their regiments take up arms at ten. Before that the chiefs of battalions wanted to make sure that all was well, and began at nine o'clock; and so on in decreasing proportion, to the corporal who had his squad up at five in the morning. All these successive taking up of arms tire the French soldier more than a day of combat.

He knows that the battle is necessary, he goes to it willingly; as to the other, he readily sees that it would be possible to dispense with him for it.

When the troops are on the ground, how many marches, counter-marches before each corps is definitely placed! How many lines formed and formed again before the Emperor comes! At last the drums beat a salute on all lines: here he is! His small hat, his mounted chasseur's green coat, distinguish him in the midst of that crowd of princes and generals loaded down with embroideries.

People to-day speak only of the soldiers' love for Napoleon, of the shouts a thousand times repeated ringing out as he passed; it is perhaps wrong in me to contradict a thing affirmed by so many illustrious persons, but I must say and I do say that these shouts were very rare.

There was good fighting in the Grand Army, but there was but little shouting, and much grumbling.

We were in camp, under the walls of Tilsit; there was a talk of peace, of an interview between the two Emperors, and we marched down to the banks of the Niemen to see what was taking place. On our arrival the conference was ended, the two boats bearing the sovereigns were each going





Vive L'Empereur.



towards the opposite shore. Emperor Alexander landed first; and was saluted by a general cheer from his troops. Napoleon appeared on our shore, Talleyrand offered him his arm to help him land. Not a shout was heard among the soldiers. Several officers, however, took the initiative. We each told our neighbour that Napoleon should not be less warmly received by us than Alexander by the Russians; and we heard here and there scattered cries of "*Vive l'Empereur!*"

"His Majesty is coming," our colonel used to say at the time of a review; I trust that the same will not be done as the last time, and that your soldiers will shout: '*Vive l'Empereur!*' I shall hold you responsible, *Messieurs*, if every soldier does not shout loudly."

We returned to our companies paraphrasing the colonel's speech, and this is what we heard murmured in the ranks:

"Let him give me my discharge, and I'll cheer as much as they please!"

"We have no bread; when my stomach is empty, I can not cheer."

"I had enlisted for six months, and here I've

been twenty years in the army; I shall cheer when I'm sent away."

"There is six months' pay due us, why does he not give it to us?"

"Don't you know why? I'll tell you: it is because, in the meantime, all those who are killed are as good as paid, etc., etc."

The Emperor came; the colonel and a few officers shouted at the top of their voices, and the rest remained silent. I have never heard French soldiers frankly cry: "*Vive l'Empereur!*" except in 1814 and 1815, when they were told to shout: "*Vive le Roi!*" I must say that then they shouted themselves hoarse: why? Because the soldier is essentially a *frondeur*, be it that he wishes from time to time to indemnify himself for his sheep-like obedience, or that he is secretly envious of those who command him, as a servant is of his master, and the pupil of his instructor.

In 1815, a regiment was going through one of the southern cities; the soldiers exhorted one another to shout: "*Vive l'Empereur!*" together and with all their might; the noise was great enough to burst the drum of the ears, to break the win-

dow-panes. After each chorus, they laughed in their sleeves, saying:

“Good! that irritates the bourgeois.”

How often has it been published that the soldiers fought for the Emperor! this again is a necessary protocol that many people have said and repeated without knowing why. The soldiers fought for their own account, to defend themselves, because in France one never hesitates when one sees danger on one side and infamy on the other. They fought because it was impossible to do otherwise, because they had to fight, because on entering the army they had found that fashion established, and that everything tended to preserve that good habit. They fought under the old monarchy with Turenne, Villars and Marshal de Saxe; under the Republic, with Hoche, Moreau, Kléber, and so many others; they will fight whenever their country will call them. Show them Prussians, Russians, or Austrians, and, whether it be Napoleon, Charles X or Louis Philippe commanding them, be certain that the French soldiers will do their duty.

Nevertheless, I know very well that the Em-

peror's presence in the army produced a great effect. Everyone had the blindest confidence in him; it was known by experience that his plans would bring victory; so that, when he arrived, our forces were morally doubled. But this perpetuity of combats tired the old soldiers, the old officers, and the old generals very much; they did not hesitate to say so, which prevented no one from doing his duty when the occasion offered.

During the Empire, the soldiers dreamed only of leave, peace, return to France; just as to-day they only dream of war, campaigns, bivouacs, combats and battles. They returned to France, and had peace and their leave: what did they do? They began to regret old times. Why? Because the heart of man always rushes forward towards a future which, having become the present, displeases just because it is no longer surrounded by clouds. "What luck!" they said, "if we should have peace!" They say to-day: "What luck, if we should have war!" And then, I repeat it, soldiers are *frondeurs*; several among them, while enjoying the repose of civil life, were not sorry to appear to regret the tumult of the camps; each



one knew very well that all their murmurs would not prevent things from going their own way, and they gave themselves a little touch of the hero in their neighbourhoods. However, the lithographers decorated the boulevards of Paris with portraits of old soldiers with large moustaches who were weeping at the sight of the word *discharge* on a card. The innumerable loungers of the capital deplored in elegiac prose the fate of our brave warriors who were pitilessly sent away, as if at all times in France there did not always exist places for private soldiers at the disposal of *amateurs*.

The French have performed prodigies of valour, and to use an expression of Napoleon: "Have squandered glory" ; but there would be no harm in letting other people say it, we should not daily break our own noses with blows of a censor.

Napoleon was no doubt a great general; his campaigns in Italy are well nigh marvellous, for at that time he did not have at his disposal the immense resources of which he later made use. The battles of the Empire have made much more noise, but they will never efface the glory of the first. "Everywhere victory was the result," some

will say. Very well, but merit is usually measured by the obstacles overthrown, and the glory of Bonaparte will never be eclipsed by that of Napoleon; for the means of the Emperor were the most vast any general ever disposed of. When from a country like France one draws the last man and the last *écu*, when one is accountable to no person, it is not astonishing that with a well-balanced head one should do great deeds, the contrary would be more surprising. Imagine Napoleon with a representative government such as exists in France to-day; he would probably have been soon stopped in his victorious march. For there are 80,000 men levied yearly, but the reports for each department are published in the newspapers, and the total is exactly in accordance with the figure demanded by law. In each department they publish the distribution by canton, and the whole carefully added represents the total by department. During the Empire, when 100,000 men were ostensibly demanded, 300,000 in reality were sent away; and with the *préfets*, this was a perpetual subject of emulation to reach the Council of State whose seats were in competition.



Now, what would Napoleon have done with a poor little conscription of 100,000 men, from France? Eighty thousand would have joined their flags, half, as is usual, would have been in the hospitals one week after; 40,000 only could be put in line, and 40,000 men were a very small matter in a time of such great expenses. They would have sufficed to defray the cost of one day; some might even be mentioned that cost more.

At each review, the Emperor made appointments to vacancies, he distributed crosses of the Legion of Honour, baronies, earldoms, entails. It was for the regiments a piece of good luck to be reviewed by the Emperor. But this was supremely unjust; I might mention regiments who during a campaign have seen the Emperor five or six times; their officers changed ranks every month, while other regiments, detached two leagues farther, have obtained nothing from the Imperial munificence.

Sometimes Napoleon liked to question the officers; when they answered promptly, without hesitation, he appeared well pleased. After the battle

of Ratisbon, he stopped before an officer of the regiment.

“How many men present under arms?”

“Sire, eighty-four.”

“How many recruits of this year?”

“Twenty-two.”

“How many soldiers with four years’ service?”

“Seventy-five.”

“How many wounded yesterday?”

“Eighteen.”

“How many killed?”

“Ten.”

“By the bayonet?”

“Yes, Sire.”

“Good.”

To be killed regularly, one had to be killed by the bayonet, a coward may die afar, struck by a bullet or a cannon ball; he who dies of a bayonet thrust is necessarily a hero. The Emperor had an extreme fondness for those who perished in this manner. The questions continued a long time on all sorts of details; he did not listen to the replies, which frequently did not agree with the preceding

figures; the essential was to make them quickly and without hesitation.

The Emperor has often been seen detaching his own cross of the Legion of Honour to place it himself on the breast of a hero. Louis XIV would first have asked if the brave man was a noble; Napoleon asked if the noble was brave. A sergeant who in a battle had performed prodigies of valour, was brought before Louis XIV: "I grant you a pension of 1,200 *livres*," said the King.

"Sire, I should prefer the cross of Saint Louis."

"I should think so, but you will not get it."

Napoleon would have embraced the sergeant, Louis XIV turned his back on him. It is the decided distinction which separates the two epochs.

Napoleon had a superb head, eyes that flashed lightning; his bearing was noble and severe. However, I one day saw the great man in the throes of irrepressible laughter; an emperor may laugh just as any other man; sovereigns would be greatly to be pitied if at times they did not have those good opportunities to laugh which do one so much good.

Here is the occurrence : We were at Courbevoie ; the Emperor was reviewing a regiment of the young Guard, recently increased by numerous recruits. His Majesty was questioning these young men.

“ And you, where do you come from ? ”

“ Sire,” replied the recruit, “ I am from Pezenas ; and my father had the honour of shaving Your Eminence when you went through our town.”

At these words, the Emperor became man, decorum was forgotten ; I do not believe that Napoleon ever laughed so heartily, even when he was at school at Brienne. The review ended gaily ; laughter is contagious, the answer was repeated from rank to rank, from right to left ; everyone burst into laughter ; the native of Pezenas was proud to have made the review so merry.

In Berlin I lodged at Major Hansing's, an old soldier who, from his campaigns in Silesia with Frederick, had brought back only a meagre pension and the gout. As an admirer of the hero of Prussia, the major was a Prussian and a half ; we discussed without being able to agree ; the subject of our ordinary conversations was an hypothesis :

What would have happened had Frederick lived at the same time as Napoleon? Never was so vast a theme offered in controversy. Each one of us preached for his own saint, and our prattling ended as end political or religious discussions; each retained his opinion, for no one is any longer converted.

In Berlin, in all Prussia, the name of Frederick II is held in great veneration; his portrait is to be found everywhere, in the fine residences as well as in the cottages. You see him standing, or riding, on the walls of the salons, of the antechambers and of the kitchens; painted or engraved, carved, cast, struck. This portrait ornaments the jewels, snuff-boxes and pipes. I do not believe that the image of any man has ever so often been reproduced. Whenever we looked at it, the eyes of our host brightened; he always exclaimed with satisfaction: "*Es ist mein alter guter Fritz.*" (That is my good old Frederick.) And then he added between his teeth: "Ah! if he were living, you would not be here."

"That's not quite so certain," we replied sometimes.

Good Major Hansing often told me anecdotes about the Prussian hero; I very much regret having forgotten them. Here is one, however, which I find in a corner of my memory.

The immense popularity which Frederick had acquired in his army, he owed more to his charlatanism than to his military genius. When he was passing a review, and he frequently did, he was given a dozen notes relating to divers officers and soldiers. On a little slip of paper which he held in his hand, were the name and biography of an individual of his army, the number of the regiment, of the battalion, of the company; the King knew in what line the man stood, what place he occupied in the line. Frederick, passing before his troops at the amble of his white horse, counted the rows; came before his soldier, and stopped:

“ Good morning, so and so, well! you know the news, your sister is married.”

“ Yesterday, I received word about it from Breslau. That marriage pleases me very much. You will so inform your father at the first opportunity.”

“ Yes, Sire.”

“He was a brave fellow, your father, one of my old soldiers of Molwitz; tell him in your letter that I have appointed him doorkeeper at Potsdam; I never forget old soldiers.”

The King continued on his way and stopped further off in front of an officer: he spoke to him of a lawsuit which his family had just won; of the death of a relative who left a rich inheritance, etc. Frederick went into the smallest details. A little further, he reproached someone for a slight prank, others received praise; to all he spoke of small matters, of things of special interest to each. All the soldiers thought themselves known by the King, each tried to attract the attention of Frederick, and all shouted on his passage: “*Es lebe unser guter Fritz!*” (Long live our good Frederick!) As he went along, the great man said to those in his confidence: “That is the oil with which I oil the wheels of my machine.”

Paul I, whom I am far from comparing to Frederick, had a rather queer habit. When he held a review, he addressed to the officers the most singular, the most ridiculous questions, to which it was impossible to reply seriously; several officers



of one regiment, much embarrassed by such queries, had been unable to answer, and since that time, the Emperor said that these gentlemen served in his regiment of *I do not know*.

On a certain day, while passing on horseback on the Saint Petersburg bridge, Paul I sees an officer who stands aside and salutes him with respect. The Emperor recognises the uniform and says to his courtiers: "He belongs to my regiment of *I do not know*."

"Sire, I know everything, I do," replied the officer.

"Ah! ah! you know everything, that is what we shall see. How many nails were there required to put together the boards on this bridge?"

"Fifty-three millions nine hundred and seventy-seven thousand one hundred and twelve."

"That's not so bad! and how many fish are there in the Neva from this bridge to Cronstadt?"

"Six hundred and forty-two *milliards* eight hundred and one millions four hundred and thirty-two thousand three hundred and seventy."

"You are sure of it?"

"Were I not, should I tell Your Majesty!"





FREDERICK WILLIAM THIRD  
King of Prussia.



"That's what I thought: I like to have people answer questions, an officer should know everything."

"Certainly: and the Emperor?"

"He is never embarrassed."

"Will Your Majesty permit me to ask a question?"

"Speak."

"What is my name?"

"Comte de Balonski."

"My rank?"

"Captain in my guard."

"I thank you."

I have this anecdote from a French *émigré*, an eye-witness, who knew Sub-lieutenant Krasanow, who owing to a moment of effrontery and the whim of a sovereign, became a count and a captain in the Russian Imperial Guard.

All sovereigns like to hold reviews; Frederick II sent out letters of invitation, and each guest was placed well or ill, but at the exact place designated by the King. Napoleon was not so particular: those who wished could come, and they placed themselves wherever they could. One of the finest

reviews ever held in this world, is certainly the one held by the Emperor at Tilsit. Alexander and Frederick William were at the side of Napoleon.

## THE BARRACKS



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE BARRACKS

The recruit which fate tears from the paternal hearth departs weeping; when he is at the barracks he has forgotten everything. Fearing the jests of his comrades, his tears are soon dry; ridicule, with us, Frenchmen, frightens more than a sword blow. When the raw soldier is measured, numbered, dressed from head to foot, he might be taken from a distance for a hero of Austerlitz. But near, it is another matter: his figure is stiff, he knows not what to do with his arms, his legs are in the way, and the raw recruit while out for a stroll always has a stick in his hand to keep up his countenance.

However, the instructor arrives: he is a corporal with prominent moustachios, a good speaker; in the interval of rest separating the hours of drill, he never fails to relate to the newcomer all the wonderful deeds which formerly have made his name illustrious. The recruit listens, open-

mouthed, and does not understand how the corporal has not yet become a colonel. The slight advancement of a man so illustrious discourages him.

The soldier is a man who possesses his twelve hundred francs income, wholly clear, without bankruptcy, without indemnity, without assessments, without bad debts. I have calculated the value of his lodgings, his food, his clothes, his heating, his furniture, which he constantly uses and never renews; from all my figures I have deduced that many *rentiers* do not live as comfortably, and especially without care, as the soldier does. Should he be ill? his doctors in ordinary, his surgeons in embroidered clothes, are delighted to treat him free of charge; the apothecary supplies him gratis with emetic and quinquina; leeches, brought at great expense from Hungary, lavish on him their beneficent punctures, under the watchful eye of the nurse, who places them on the parts indicated by the prescription.

And then, besides all these advantages, think also of the pocket-sou. The pocket-sou, ever coming, always disappearing: a fertile, inexhaustible



mine, which provides for all pleasures, from the "drop" of brandy to the pipe of tobacco.

The soldier always dwells in the finest house in the town. Go to Saint Denis, ask for the finest mansion: it is the barracks; at Vincennes, the soldiers inhabit the apartments of our Kings; at Avignon, they are installed in the palace of the Popes. Well dressed, kept warm, with a good bed, well fed, what does the soldier lack? This is what he lacks: freedom from the collar.

That collar which is riveted around the soldier's neck is broken only by the discharge, he is freed from it only on the last day of service, or by a cannon ball. All the time that the soldier spends at the regiment is divided in a hundred different manners, of which hardly one belongs to him. If he sleeps, the drum awakens him; if he is awake, the drum calls him to sleep. The drum makes him march, stops him, takes him to the drill, to the combat, to mass, to the walk. "I am hungry." "You are mistaken, my friend, the drum has not beaten the roll, which alone should stir the fibres of your stomach. The soup can not be ready for the drum has not said so."

All these orders of the drum, of the corporal or of the officers must be carried out at once, without remarks, without answers. When the clock-maker winds the clock, it goes without asking why. Soldier! you are a clock; march, turn, halt, and above all not a word.

“But, captain . . .”

“To the guard-house for two days.”

“If you would only listen to me . . .”

“Four days.”

“Yet . . .”

“Eight days.”

“It is unjust.”

“In prison for two weeks. If you say another word, look out of the dungeon and court-martial.”

It is the summary justice of the regiment, one becomes accustomed to it as to everything else; as soon as a soldier has experienced the guard-house, he strikes a difference and later profits by the lesson. I, however, except the scamps, incorrigible fellows, habitual guests of the prison, who finally end in the galleys or by being shot.

This great severity was necessarily required to

permit of a single man becoming master of one hundred thousand armed ones. Passive obedience from rank to rank is the condition *sine quâ non* of the existence of an army. The most foolish, the most stupid order must be carried out without a murmur. What could be done if everyone took upon himself the right of giving his opinion? We all think ourselves quite intelligent; within ourselves we often call fools our neighbour who on his side returns the compliment with interest. A military chief who should consult his officers, who should even listen to their remonstrances, would never be certain of the carrying out of an order. One would modify it; another would think he was saving the army by doing the exact opposite.

In a discussion between a superior and an inferior, the greatest mistake of the latter is to be right. In the army, I have known officers of much intelligence, who denied themselves, bowed to every whim, established themselves advisers of high personages, and never allowed it to be thought that they had suggested good advice. This is the quintessence of the courtier's act, everybody can not reach that point.

Many generals wanted to play the part of princes.

The uniform of aides-de-camp were a blue dress jacket with sky-blue cuffs and collar. Almost all the servants of the generals were thus dressed; all they lacked was the epaulet. In this manner one had a finely organised corps of servants of all ranks: captain, lieutenant, valet, grooms, etc. These aristocratic fashions had replaced Republican plainness, with no shade of transition. I have known aides-de-camp who admirably lent themselves to all these forms of hierarchical servitude; they went before the *valet de chambre*, that was sufficient for them. On the other hand, I have known generals who carried reserve to the verge of scruple. Never would they have demanded of officers under them a service not within the sphere of military duties.

I arrive one day with General P—— at an uninhabited house; it was pouring, our clothes were wet through, we light a fire, we warm ourselves.

“Sit down there,” says the general to me.

“What for?”

“I want to pull off your boots.”

"You are jesting!"

"Not at all, give me your foot."

"General, I can not allow you."

"Your boots are wet, your feet are in water, you will catch cold."

"But I'll take them off myself."

"I want to take them off for you."

Willing or no, the general drew off my boots; my astonishment was extreme; when it was done:

"My turn now," said he; "one good turn deserves another; take off my boots."

"With pleasure."

"To have the right to ask you that favour, I had to go about it that way."

It must not be believed that the soldier at the barracks leads an idle life; his duties are linked one with the other in such a manner that he only rests by changing his work. The drudgery for the general cleanliness of the buildings and courts, the cleaning of his weapons and clothes, the drill, guard duty; one thing follows the other periodically so that the soldier should not long be idle.

In the barracks one reads much in leisure moments; very blood-thirsty novels are in great

favour. One always sees a reading room near the place where the regiment is quartered. Enter, and you will easily recognise the popular books by the thick layer of black which serves as a cover. I was one day standing near the lady in charge; enters a young recruit, stick in hand.

“Have you *Robert*, chief of brigands?”

“No, Monsieur, it is out.”

“Have you *Rinaldo Rinaldini*?”

“No, Monsieur, your comrades are reading it.”

“Have you . . . but I do not know the titles; let me have some other book of brigandage.”

Five or six combine together for the same subscription, sometimes the entire squad, and the ablest does the reading aloud. It is a pleasure to see all these worthy troopers listening, open-mouthed, to the marvellous stories of Cartouche, Mandrin or of La Ramée. Not that the soldiers feel any special sympathy for robbers, but the adventurous life of the latter has some resemblance with the episodes, the dangers of the career of glory. They prefer to read the story of robbers than that of heroes, they know the latter by heart, they have learned all our campaigns, all our sabre strokes

without loosening their purse strings. In each barrack-room there is always to be found an old soldier who has seen everything, and who never allows the chance to slip to recount his feats of valour. In each company there exists a man of that kind whose moral influence over his comrades is very wide. It is he who criticises the captain's every operation. "In my former regiment," he always says, "we did not do thus." His former regiment is his charger, it is the example which everyone must follow. When he changes corps, the one he leaves will in turn become the model, for he cannot cite two of them, and the last will always be the best.

In the barracks, there is a wing to lodge a certain number of officers; a few shepherds are of course needed for so large a flock. In the barracks are to be found dealers in wine, brandy and tobacco, sometimes billiard-rooms and restaurants.

The canteen-woman, after having carried her keg slung over her shoulder on the highways, takes her ease in a corner of the ground floor, pompously called restaurant. Further off, is the café; do not seek the luxury of gildings, mirrors and crystal

chandeliers there; what does it matter? it offers to the sub-lieutenants a great advantage which acts as a sufficient compensation; credit is given until the end of the month, and for certain purses, this is an important matter.

I have been through that many times. *Experto crede Roberto*. And it is there that the regiment news are told. There also sometimes are weighed the destinies of Europe.



PRISONERS OF WAR — MILITARY  
EXECUTIONS



## CHAPTER XIV

### PRISONERS OF WAR — MILITARY EXECUTIONS

Among civilised nations, ours is the one which treats prisoners of war best. In France, a disarmed enemy is no longer an enemy; not only does the government take care of them, but besides this, private individuals give them all the assistance in their power. When columns of prisoners of war crossed France, charitable people were seen in every city to take up collections for their benefit. All Europe is there to testify to the truth of this, for we have had in France prisoners from all parts of Europe.

Indeed, we were far from receiving the same treatment in foreign lands. In Russia, our unfortunate fellow-soldiers were sent to Siberia, and God knows what they had to endure. In England, not only did they have to suffer from the harshness of the government, but individuals themselves treated them as enemies; the hatred between nation

and nation had become a hatred between man and man. The people who carried barbarity the farthest, was without contradiction, the Spanish people. When our unfortunate prisoners were not hanged, they crossed Spain in the midst of all possible outrages; they suffered hunger, thirst; daily attacked with stones, covered with mud, those who objected to this infamous treatment were imprisoned in the island of Cabrera, in the convict-ships of Cadiz! These horrors have been made known to me through report only; they prove that a man can suffer many grievous things without dying, and that a great resemblance exists between the old Christians of Spain and the cannibals of the South Sea.

During our sojourn at Polsen, there passed through that city a column of Russian prisoners which Napoleon was sending back to Emperor Alexander, armed, dressed, newly equipped and organised into regiments. Bonaparte, a few years before, had done the same act of politeness to Paul I, in returning in the same way the prisoners made by Massena in the campaign of Switzerland. Our soldiers were furious to see new clothes on

them, made of fine cloth, while they had only old ones which no one thought of having changed. The government was paying its court to the Emperor of Russia, and our own prisoners returning from Siberia, in rags, stick in hand, passed these superb columns armed with French guns.

Every officer, prisoner of war, was left on the muster-roll, for reference; his turn of advancement passed, he was no longer thought of. The Emperor only thought of the men present; it may be said of him that no sovereign ever treated the prisoners of the enemy better and those of his own army worse; he seemed to wish to punish them for having allowed themselves to be taken, as if a corps had ever been taken prisoner through the fault of the soldier or that of the ordinary officer.

The regiments always did their duty; whenever they have been taken either in whole or part, it is because they were not supported, or that a task beyond the possible had been demanded of them. The fault was always, either of circumstances, or of the commander-in-chief, whoever he may have been, emperor, marshal or general. As these gen-

tllemen take to themselves alone all the glory of a campaign, it is but just that they should be held responsible for the blunders they make from time to time: *suum cuique*. Besides, their share is large enough, since the bravery of the soldier and of the officer, when crowned by success, redounds to the credit of the general-in-chief whose fame it increases. Our soldiers are brave beyond expression; whenever one hundred ready men were called for, a thousand came forth from the ranks. The great trouble of the officers was to hold them back, they always went too fast. I shall say no more, Europe has seen them. All that may be written will neither increase nor diminish their fame. The story of so many great deeds, sculptured in stone, cast in bronze, will last longer than the Colonne Vendôme and the Arc de Triomphe: *monumentum ære perennius*.

Frederick II knew our army well; when Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick took the place of the Duke of Cumberland after the battle of Hastenbeck, won by Maréchal d'Estrées in 1757, he said to him: "Cousin, you are going to fight the French;

you will find it easy to defeat their generals, but the soldiers, never."

While our compatriot prisoners endured in the roads of Cadiz, in the island of Cabrera, all possible physical and moral suffering; while those who were going through the villages on their way to those horrible destinations were being pelted with mud and all sorts of ignominies, the Spaniards whom the fortune of war had caused to fall into our hands were as well treated in France as were the French soldiers; in certain localities they were treated even better. Sometimes it happened that individuals of the two armies rendered one another assistance in adversity; for after all soldiers when fighting kill each other without hatred. During an armistice, we often visited the enemy's cantonments, and although ready to kill one another at the slightest signal, we were not the less disposed to render each other services if the occasion presented itself.

After the campaign of Austria, in 1809, the French army occupied the principality of Bayreuth; the Austrian army was cantoned on the frontiers

of Bohemia. War was not yet declared, but everyone knew that we were only waiting for the return of Spring. We used to visit the Austrian officers in the neighbourhood of Egra; these gentlemen returned our calls; we dined together, champagne was not spared, everything went along pleasantly. At the time when the army started on the march, we met; we all took an oath over the bluish flame of a bowl of punch to render each other all possible services, if anyone of us should become prisoners of war. Each wrote down in his note book the name and address of all the friend-enemies, and we separated. Two weeks after, the battle of Ratisbon was fought; on both sides prisoners were made among the members of the association; they were well recommended in the cities of Austria and of France which they were to cross, in those where they were to dwell, assistance in money was supplied them, each forked out to fulfil that debt of honour, and individuals thus softened the ills caused by governments.

Military laws are very severe, they have to be; otherwise how could a general make himself obeyed by a hundred thousand men who all, individually,



are as strong as he? A misdemeanour which in private life is punishable by a few days' imprisonment, brings the penalty of death with the soldier. The slightest assault towards a superior, the theft of the smallest article in the enemy's country, is the cause of a man's death. This last case being punished only by fits and starts, during two or three weeks the soldiers were allowed to maraud at pleasure, because there were no supplies to distribute to them. If a van of bread or of biscuit arrived, immediately an order of the day forbade any sort of plunder; the first poor devil caught in the act suffered for everybody. I have seen some of these petty thieves shot for a shirt, a pair of boots, stolen from a peasant; but never was the great thief in large financial combinations punished with the slightest penalty. Sometimes the Emperor made them disgorge, but they were never shot.

Military executions were for the small fry. Laws resemble spiders' webs: the gnats are caught in them, the drones go through. On the eve of the battle of Wagram, twelve employés of the supplies department were caught in the act of sell-

ing the rations of the Imperial Guard; a few hours after they were shot.

"I trust that this example will not be lost on you," I said to a certain supplies' man of my acquaintance; "the lesson is a good one, be careful."

"Bah!" he replied, "in the last battle, did you not see several of your friends die?"

"Yes, what relation . . . !"

"Will that prevent you from fighting to-morrow?"

"What a difference!"

"I see none."

"So much the worse for you."

These worthy employés of the supplies department were really the *canons* of the army. While the military section was fighting or bivouacked in the mud, these gentlemen stalked proudly through the neighbouring towns, courting the ladies, while storing away the flour supplied by the requisitions. Probably some of it remained in their hands, for in general they were loaded down with gold with which they knew not what to do. You know the proverb about the embar-

rassment of riches; I have often recognised its truth in some of these gentlemen. To send their money to France by the post, was only possible in small quantities. Had the sum been too large, people would have made conjectures; the minister of war, in reckoning that with a pay of 100 *louis* one can not save 10,000 francs a year, would have cashiered the thief. They dared not leave the hoard in their lodgings, because, after all, doors may be opened or forced; to carry it always on one is troublesome and inconvenient. Poor unfortunates! they all resorted to the last course. I have seen some whose belts were of enormous weight, whose clothes were a cuirass of gold placed between the cloth and the lining.

Differing in that respect from the Paris usurers, who make young men sign notes for double the sum they give them, the employés offered to the officers whose parents were rich a premium of from 30 to 40 per cent. on a note; they did the banking business at reduced rates. Officers of my acquaintance have received 1,500 francs in gold for a letter of credit of 1,000 francs, payable in six months, in France. The essential for *mes-*

*sieurs* the employés was to conceal their fortune; this premium had for them no real importance, in three days they had recovered more than the amount.

One day, it was at Kloster-Neuburg, an illustrious and celebrated abbey four leagues from Vienna, the immense cellars of this convent had been taken to make distributions of wine to the army; an employé was delivering the casks at the rate of one quart to a man. A quartermaster tastes the wine, and finds it weak.

“I say, mister store-keeper, you are giving us water!”

“How, water! Don’t you see that it is wine?”

“Wine mighty well baptised. We could have taken charge of that operation; you should not have spared us the trouble.”

“The quartermasters are never satisfied.”

“Just because you always are. Just consider that we are camping on the banks of the Danube. I refuse the distribution. I do not wish my men to break their backs carrying water in the neighbourhood of a river.”

“ Well, taste it all of you, and you will see who is right; the quartermaster or I.”

A cask is battered in, a canteen is dipped in the inside, what do they find? . . . a live fish which was in as good health as its colleagues in the Danube. Then there was a general shout against the employé; the soldiers rushed on him; the officer who presided at the distribution had great difficulty in getting him out of their hands.

A regiment is on the march, the men talk, laugh boisterously, sing some lively song, there is a running fire of jests. An aide-de-camp appears, he speaks to the colonel who gives the order to halt and load weapons. Soon we resume our march, the jests have ceased, no one says anything; each does his own thinking as to what is about to happen: that is the man alone with himself. The enemy present themselves, everybody shouts “ forward ”; everyone wishes to advance on the run: that is man. You want to do that? so do I; you want to run? well! I shall beat you, but if you wanted to remain seated, I should ask no better than to lie down.

I was saying that gnats are caught in spiders' webs. At the time of the retreat from Portugal, General D—— had a poor devil shot for having eaten a bunch of grapes! "Horrible!" some will say; "It is impossible!" others will repeat; to that I reply: It is true; I'll say more, it was just. Dysentery was making ravages in the army, the soldiers died by the dozen. It was forbidden, under pain of death, to eat grapes, this fruit being the sole cause of that illness. The first soldier caught in the act suffered for the others. The council of war assembled on the road; a quarter of an hour after, the poor devil was no more.

What happened? no more grapes were eaten, and health returned to all; through the death of one man, several thousands were saved; the general-in-chief was right. The Romans said on great occasions: *Caveant consules*. Whether D—— had the right to give that order, or not, no matter; that atrocious severity was approved by all, for it perhaps saved one-half of the army. If some fine gentlemen with long phrases had been there, the subject was certainly broad enough to display their eloquence; they would have obtained

the pardon of the poor devil, they would have killed the body in sparing the member. The death of the grape-eater was a necessity for us all; it was imperative that everyone should see that the order of the day was not a vain threat; as soon as they were persuaded, the effect ceased by the stoppage of the cause.

Had the same promptness been shown in having the big thieves executed, the war in Spain would not have lasted so long. How many gold and silver statues of saints, how many sacred vases and chalices were transformed into bullion, and later exchanged for residences in Paris! How many diamonds and rubies, after having ornamented for centuries the pompous and poetical ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church have been astounded and shocked to find themselves about the neck of an Opera dancer!

The magnificent paintings which decorated the churches of Spain have almost all taken their way to France; they to-day grace the galleries of the lucky of our capital. In my time these were hardly any more to be seen, we were shown the empty spaces covered by filthy black serge; there



were left only some coarse paintings, done by the daubers of the Inquisition.

Had a few of our amateurs of fine arts who so carefully protected them in their vans by a strong escort, been ordered shot, the war would not have become national; but many would have been obliged to order themselves shot.

But that of which I have always disapproved, the thing which was always an affliction for me, was the severity exercised in punishing plunder one day, after having tacitly authorised it during a month. As soon as the order had been issued, woe to the man who did not conform to it, the next day he was no more. We arrive at Weimar, some soldiers go out and maraud in the neighbouring villages, a peasant is killed; suddenly the marauders are surrounded, two hundred are arrested and imprisoned in a church. General L—— immediately appoints a council of war to judge the assassin who is to be shot the next morning before the departure of the division.

One of my friends, appointed reporter of the council, goes to the church followed by all the peasants; none recognise the guilty one, who prob-



ably had not let himself be caught. His mission ended there, since no one was accused. Our reporter hastens to the general, he explains the case.

"No matter, *Monsieur*," said M. L——, "do as best you can, the crime must be punished."

"Certainly, but on whom?"

"That concerns you."

"The peasants all agree that the assassin wore red epaulets, he is therefore a grenadier; we have forty in prison, I have had them placed separately, but none has been recognised as the assassin."

"Put the name of all these grenadiers in a bag, make them draw lots, the one whose name comes out first will be shot to-morrow."

"General, I do not wish to have charge of such a performance."

"I order you to do so."

"I refuse."

"Give me back your sword."

"Here it is."

"Take the captain to prison!"

General L—— was at dinner; he rises, furious, calls the corporal of the guard, and orders the arrest of the captain-reporter. But the next day,

being more sober, the general returned the sword, and no one was shot.

In the Bautzen campaign, a footsoldier of my regiment was militarily executed for having stolen a woman's black apron with which to make a neck-tie.

A military execution is a terrible sight. I have never seen a civil execution, I know the guillotine through the prints; but very often my duty has placed me face to face with an unfortunate about to be shot. I do not know what the state of his pulse may have been, but it certainly beat no faster than mine.

The troops form a square that has but three sides; the fourth is empty, it has to serve as a passage for the bullets. Grand military pomp is expressly displayed, and it is but right, for since a terrible example is being made, it must at least be rendered useful to those who remain. The condemned man appears accompanied by a priest; suddenly the drums beat a salute until the culprit has reached the centre of the troops. Then comes a roll of the drums. The captain-reporter reads the sentence, the drums roll once more, the man

is made to kneel, he is blindfolded and a dozen corporals commanded by an adjutant sub-lieutenant fire on the unfortunate who is at ten paces in front of them.

To decrease, if possible, the agony of the condemned man, the commands are not spoken, the adjutant gives them with his cane which acts as a signal. In case the man should not be dead after the volley, which sometimes happens, a reserve platoon is ready to finish him, by firing at close quarters.

It is with an oppressed heart that I describe these horrors; sad memories come to haunt me; the poor unfortunates whom I have seen on their knees at that fatal moment all appear to me as phantoms; and yet at all these executions, whenever they took place near a city, some beautiful ladies of the locality never failed to be present. With their sensitive nerves they solicited a good place from which they could see everything, and then the next day they fainted if someone killed a chicken in their presence.

When the judgment has been carried out, all the troops file past before the body; each returns

to his barrack-room, it is the topic of conversation for three days, and soon it is forgotten.

I have seen several of these unfortunates die with admirable composure.

I have seen some who addressed the regiment, commanded the fire, not a single syllable denoting in them the slightest emotion. But the man who, in such a circumstance, showed the most astonishing courage was General Malet.<sup>18</sup> Conducted to the plain of Grenelle with thirteen of his accomplices, he asked, as chief of the conspirators, for permission to give the command to fire.

"Shoulder . . . arms!" he exclaimed in a thundering voice. "That's no good, we'll begin all over. Stand at ease, everybody! Shoulder . . . arms! Good, well done. Platoon . . . ready! Aim! Fire!" . . . All fell, except Malet who alone remained standing.

"How about me, *sacré nom de D*——, you have forgotten me, my friends! The reserve platoon, forward! Good. Shoulder . . . arms! Ready . . . Aim . . . Fire!" . . .

## RETIREMENT



## CHAPTER XV

### RETIREMENT

“ Did you never have the desire of becoming a soldier? ” said I one day to Abbé Barberi, who was the first to initiate me into the mysteries of the declension and the conjugation, in the glad-some science of the participle, and the merry combinations of the gerund and of the supine.

“ Oh! certainly, I’ve had it, and although old, I would still have it, could I choose my occupation.”

“ And which would you prefer? ”

“ Frankly speaking, I have always desired the rank of general of division, retired.”

During the thirty years that an officer spends in the service, he daily thinks of the time when, retired, he will be able, free from all duty, to act according to his fancy, plant his cabbage or have them planted. When the time comes, when he is settled in his little town, he is usually lonesome.

His life used to be daily cut up by events, episodes; it is now going to pass with frightful monotony.

Fortunate is he if he has selected a garrison town as a place of residence.

In that case, the parade hour, the arrival of a regiment, a grand manœuvre are for him pieces of good luck which he never misses.

The retired officer is easy to recognise. First his face does not resemble that of the notary or of the doctor; it is sun-burnt, severe; his features are very prominent; his speech is brief and accented. If the officer returned to private life still gives orders, his tone is without rejoinder; he carries out the orders; he sees that they are carried out, because he must obey and be obeyed; it is one of the conditions of his existence. He is good, but his children tremble in his presence: if he speaks they must be silent. He is old, but his figure is straight; he walks with a strut; if he is lame, if he has but one leg, if the one he lacks is replaced by a piece of wood, never mind, you will still hear the symmetrical and cadenced sound of the military step.

The retired officer, in his civilian clothes, always



retains something which savours of the regiment.

His black cravat allows a white piping to be seen; his waistcoat has numbered buttons, he often wears uniform trousers, and at home he is always to be found wearing a foraging-cap; his dressing-gown is an old dress-coat cut short six inches.

If he takes his wife to see the manœuvre, for a retired officer is essentially married, his attention is absorbed by the commands; he sees the mistakes and points them out to his neighbours. If a change of front is about to occur, he does not fail to say:

“Let us get away from here, my dear, they are going to come this way.”

Make an appointment with a retired officer, he will always be there first; military punctuality is never forgotten. He will not say: “I’ll call on you in the afternoon,” but “after the parade.” The words parade, drill, manœuvre, are incrustated in his brain. In his estimation, his regiment was the foremost in the army. Start him on that subject and you’ll hear some fine things. That brotherhood which brings together two thousand men around the same flag, proceeds from the

noblest sentiments; there is in it, perhaps, a slight dose of conceit; besides, without conceit what would one do?

The officer often counts his years of service, his campaigns, his wounds; he knows by heart the law relating to retirements and the list which goes with them. He always calculates at what time will come the new rank so long awaited, a rank which must of necessity increase the rate with regard to him.

"When I get my retirement, I shall go to Brittany; one can live cheaply there, and game is plentiful," said one.

"I shall go to Burgundy, people drink good wine there," said another.

"And I," said a third, "to Provence, the weather is always fine, in spite of the *mistral*, or perhaps because of the *mistral*."

Cannon balls often disturbed all these fine projects, which did not hinder the remaining officers from building new castles in Spain, the very next day.

In the career of glory one gets many things: the gout and ribbons, a pension and rheumatism.

Oh! my leg, the weather is going to change. Oh, dear! my arm, the barometer is going down. And then frozen feet, the loss of a member, a bullet which has lodged between two bones and which the surgeon has not been able to extract. What do I say, one, two, ten bullets; I have known brave soldiers whose skins looked like a skimmer and who carried in their body lead in quantity sufficient to go to the hunt on the opening day. How many chances there are in this world! . . . some were wounded every time they went on the firing line, others always returned safe and sound.

All those bivouacs in rain and snow, all those privations, all those fatigues experienced in youth, you suffer for them on becoming old, when you have retired.

Because one has suffered in the past, one must suffer more, a condition seemingly not very just. The pay is less high, but as a compensation the needs are doubled.

Sometimes the retired officer utilises his leisure by honourable employment; others withdraw to the country, they take care of their garden and

hunt as much as they can; they are right, I am not the one to find fault with them.

I have known some who would have accepted employment from no one and at no price. After an obedience of thirty years, they delight in that sweet thought that they are their own masters; that to go, come, eat, sleep, they no longer have to ask permission and that they are free to act in all respects according to their own will.

A captain of cavalry, about to retire, made a singular proposition to the oldest trumpeter of his regiment.

"My friend," said he to him, "I am going to retire to the country; I own a small house, a few acres of land and my pension; with all these things I expect to live at my ease. If you wish to come with me, we shall plant cabbage and eat them together."

"Do I wish to! I should say I did!"

"Well! I'm going to secure your discharge, but I have one condition to make."

"Which?"

"You will perform in the country, at my home,

the same service as in the regiment. You will sound the reveille and the various bugle calls."

"Captain, I'll sound anything you wish."

Our two men depart, arrive and instal themselves in a modest house where the captain was delighted to be his own master and to be able to dispose of his time according to his fancy. At certain hours, the trumpeter, after having sounded his martial instrument, came all out of breath to the officer's chamber.

"Well! what is it?"

"Captain, the regiment is mounting horse."

"The regiment is quite right, were I in its place, I should do the same thing, in my place, it would do as I do, what do I care for the regiment."

The good captain did not exactly say: "What do I care"; he made use of a more emphatic expression, but I dare not repeat it here. Those worthy cavalry officers . . . they always swear. We footsoldiers are infinitely more reserved. The captain arose late, sometimes he did not rise at all. He smoked his pipe, watched his cabbages growing, and laughed in his sleeve

on hearing the trumpeter periodically sound his harmonious solos.

"Well! what is it now?"

"Captain, there are grand manœuvres to-day."

"What do I care!"

"The weather is beautiful . . ."

"So much the better, my friend, but what do I care!"

"Parade."

"Good!"

"Grooming!"

"Excellent!"

"Inspection!"

"Better and better."

"Drill on foot."

"What else?"

"Mounted drill."

"I expected that."

"And then to-morrow a review by the marshal."

"Bravo! I was sure of it." And he broke forth into loud laughter.

"Well, what do I care! . . . I am going to bed."

As for me, dear reader, to thank you for the

patience you have had in following me through all my prattling, I shall whisper to you that I resemble that worthy captain a little. I have no trumpeter subject to my orders, at which I am very often angry; but as a fortunate compensation, the cabbages I plant grow at Chenevières-sur-Marne. From the heights of this village, I have the satisfaction of hearing the drums, the trumpets and even the cannon of Vincennes. "Come, courage! my friends," I sometimes say to them, "beat, blow, fire, thunder, what do I care!" and I go to bed.





## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The *Vélites* were light infantry volunteers. Two corps of *vélites* composed of 800 men had been organised by a decree of the Year XII. They were in turn garrisoned at Saint-Germain, Ecouen and Fontainebleau. These corps constituted a sort of regimental schools. The greater number of *vélites*, as soon as their education was completed, were appointed sub-lieutenants and assigned to regiments.

<sup>2</sup> After the Battle of Eylau (7-8 February, 1807), the losses of the army and the weakening of the soldiers compelled Napoleon, in spite of victory, not to pursue the Russians. Besides, after a plentiful fall of snow, a thaw had begun. Napoleon then drew back on the Passarge, and placed his troops in cantonments to cover the siege of Dantzic and the march of Jerome on Silesia. The Third Army Corps to the right and the First to the left encircle the Fourth, the Sixth is in the East around Güttstadt, the Guard is in the rear around Osterode, the Fifth corps at Warsaw; and it was towards Thorn that the line of operation was maintained.

<sup>3</sup> The camp of Finkenstein, was established at the end of February, 1807. The Guard, after having marched from Thorn on Marienbourg and Osterode and cantoned in the snow, established itself before Finkenstein. For the Emperor who, a few days before had, in the midst of his Guard, only a barn for shelter, a palace of brick was erected.

<sup>4</sup> It was the month of December, 1808, that the retreat of General John Moore on Corunna took place. This retreat

cost England 10,000 men and General Moore who was mortally wounded.

<sup>5</sup> This determination on the part of the Emperor was a corollary of the decree of Berlin. As we could receive indigo only from England, by using white cloth for the army, Napoleon deprived English commerce of a branch of its industry.

<sup>6</sup> The Imperial Guard was generally detested by the other corps, furious at its egoism and its haughty pretensions. The private in the Guard, following the example of his officers, considered himself much above his superiors in the line.

"The entire army feared the contact of this corps spoiled by the favours, the extreme indulgence and the partiality of its monarch commander-in-chief." (General Hulot.)

<sup>7</sup> Friant's Division, to which belonged the 108th, Blaze's Regiment, was one of those assigned to meet Marie-Louise of Austria at the frontiers of the Empire.

It was on March 16, 1810, at Braunau, that the future Empress was delivered into the hands of Marshal Berthier, Prince of Neufchâtel, representing the Emperor. Having left Vienna on the 13th, Marie-Louise had crossed Austria amidst the ringing of the bells of all the villages and the enthusiasm of the peasantry cheering her passage. She reached Altheim, on the Bavarian frontier on the 16th.

Between Braunau and Altheim three pavilions, one Austrian, the other neutral, the last French, had been erected, for pleasure had been taken in reviving the protocolary forms which, forty years before had marked the marriage of Marie-Antoinette. It was at half past one, in the neutral pavilion, that Prince Trautmannsdorf exchanged with the Prince of Neufchâtel the documents certifying to the delivery, then Marie-Louise came to embrace Caroline Bonaparte who was awaiting her in the French pavilion. Rejoicings brought together at Braunau the members of the two missions, French and Austrian, but the very next day

Marie-Louise had to bid good-bye to the ladies who had accompanied her.

<sup>8</sup> Tour-d'Auvergne (Théophile-Malo Corret de la), born at Carhaix (Finistère), Nov. 23, 1743, killed at Oberhausen (Bavaria), June 27, 1800. He was descended from a bastard branch of the House of Bouillon. A captain at the time of the Revolution, he refused all advancement, went to serve (1792) in the Army of the Alps, then (1793) in the Army of the Pyrénées-Orientales where placed at the head of all the companies of grenadiers of the army, he distinguished himself by a thousand deeds of bravery and daring. His disinterestedness equalled his fearlessness. Taken prisoner by the English (1795) and exchanged in 1797, he re-entered the army as substitute for the son of his friend Le Brigant, and went through the campaign of Zurich (1799). Appointed *premier grenadier de la république* by Bonaparte (1800), he declined that distinction, went to rejoin Moreau's army in Germany and perished six days after his arrival at the camp.

<sup>9</sup> The complete laxness of discipline had slowly brought about the invasion of the camps by a crowd of women. Mistresses of Marshals of the Empire and of the generals, actresses, *danseuses*, Spanish women by the thousand, young girls, formed a love escort following the army in barouches, in cabriolets, on mules, on asses, and on foot according to the fortune of their protectors or circumstances.

<sup>10</sup> One is surprised to-day to find in all the soldiers who occupied Germany from 1806 to 1809 the same sympathy for the inhabitants. That is easily explained; the populations at that time gave the French troops the kindest of reception and, far from fleeing at their approach, they offered them the most liberal hospitality. The Poles, on the contrary, as soon as the coming of a detachment was announced, deserted the villages and devoted their whole energy in concealing their provisions. But practise in marauding enabled the troopers sounding the ground with their ram-rods to

find, even in the depths of the woods the Poles' best hiding-places.

It was only later and as the continued presence of the French troops became too burdensome to the Germans, and their patience and good nature disappeared.

<sup>11</sup> "In the environs of Pultusk, the roads have disappeared beneath the waters and mud, one sees only wrecked carriages and horses buried to the belly; the six-horse coaches of the Emperor, in spite of all precautions, upset in frightful bogs, and it is necessary to lead a horse to one of the coach doors to enable the Emperor to extricate himself from this dangerous predicament." (Coignet.)

As to the army, it was never so wretched; "the soldier, always on the march, bivouacking every night, spending entire days in mud up to the knees," without bread, without brandy, falls with fatigue and exhaustion. Many die in the ditches. Those who still march are frightful to behold, "the fire and smoke of the bivouacs have rendered them yellow, wan, unrecognisable, their eyes are inflamed, their clothes covered with filth and smoky . . . they are gloomy and dreamy or mumbling curses and insults." (Baron Percy.)

<sup>12</sup> It was an aide-de-camp to General Rottembourg that Blaze left for Spain.

<sup>13</sup> When a soldier had proved himself a coward, or else committed a grave offence against his comrades, the latter condemned him to receive fifty blows of a *savate* (old shoe). The judges themselves carrying out the sentence.

<sup>14</sup> *Coup de manchette* was the name given to the blow of a sword that struck the wrist; the duel code expressly forbade this blow.

<sup>15</sup> General Dorsenne, "handsome Dorsenne," as he was nicknamed as a just homage, rendered both to his care in dress and his physical advantages, had been made a colonel of grenadiers of the Guard on his return from Egypt, from where he had come back covered with wounds. He was a

superb soldier in whom one could forgive this eccentricity of being as scrupulously thoughtful of his attire on the day of a battle as on the night of a reception at the Tuileries, so much did he exhibit in turn of fearlessness in action and stoical courage. There are words of his that are of heroic simplicity; at Essling, after having had two horses killed under him, a shell in exploding covered him with earth and threw him down, he arose and, dusting his clothes with fillips he uttered but one word: "Bunglers!"

<sup>16</sup> It was on the 27th of June, 1807, that the Guard manœuvred before the two Emperors; the King of Prussia, who, the evening before, had been present at the interview of the Emperors, was ill and excused himself. The days which follow were taken up by fraternal banquets between the soldiers and officers of the two armies, reviews, visits to the camps. Blaze refers to one of these visits.

<sup>17</sup> Here is this curious document:

"The governor of the town caused a parley to be sounded and a white flag to be planted on one of the angles of the bastion. An officer immediately came forward and asked what was wanted. The answer came that they wanted to capitulate, then hostages were proposed, and the exchange took place. The town gave two officers, the besiegers sent them an equal number."

Here are the terms of the capitulation:

"We, the governor, having considered the state of our town, the advantage of the besiegers, having no hope of being assisted, have assembled a council of war, in which, after having considered our position, it has been decided to surrender the place on the following conditions, to wit:

"1. That the citizens of the town will on no account be molested, that they will be free in the exercise of their religion, and that they will not be deprived of any of the privileges which they have always enjoyed, and which our Kings have always authorised;

"2. That several privileged buildings, such as hospitals,

churches, town-houses, which have been destroyed by the besiegers shall be rebuilt at their expense;

"3. That the deserters shall not be sought;

"4. That all prisoners taken by either side during the sorties shall be returned regardless of number;

"5. That the sick, no matter what the nature of their ailments may be, shall be cared for by the besiegers;

"6. That four covered vans shall be granted to take away the furniture and other effects of the besieged without it being permitted to look in them;

"7. That four coaches shall be supplied for several ladies of quality who found themselves confined in our town during the investment, and who were not permitted to leave although we asked it;

"8. That we shall come out accompanied by our garrison, with all the honours of war, that is, with beating drums, flags unfurled, with all our guns, eight pieces of cannon, eight mortars, arms and baggage;

"We promise on our word of honour that there shall be supplied to the commander of the detachment which is to escort us a safe-conduct duly signed to withdraw in all safety to the territory in the dominion of the victors.

"Signed: LE CHEVALIER D'ALLEMANT, Governor,  
and CHARLES DE BOURBON, Comte d'Eu."

<sup>18</sup> Malet (Claude François de), a French general, born at Dôle in 1754. Having hatched against Napoleon I a plot which was almost successful, he was arrested, tried by a military commission and sentenced to death. The very day of his condemnation, October 29, 1812, he (and thirteen accomplices) was taken to the plain of Grenelle and shot.









75  
DC 198 .B6 A43

Blaze, Elzéar, 1786-1848

Recollections of an officer of

010101 000



0 1163 0201185 7

TRENT UNIVERSITY

DC198 .B6A43

Blaze, Elzéar Jean Louis Joseph

Recollections of an officer of  
Napoleon's army

DATE

211177

211177

